

## HAUNTED!

—OR,—

### FLORENCE IVINGTON'S OATH.

BY MRS. MARY A. DENISON.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### AT THE HOTEL.

It was a picture, framed in by a heavy stone arch, dripping with rain. It was only a child—an ordinary child, over whose head was pinned a small handkerchief that had once flaunted rich colors on the neck of some fashionable lady. The handkerchief was tied in a knot under the girl's chin. Her large eyes, dark and sad—one might almost have said hungry, in their yearning outlook—scanned the clouds that could be seen through an alley that extended straight on; one hand hung listless, grasping a much-worn tambourine, whose tiny bells now and then gave a faint musical echo, as the child moved to let a stranger pass. The other hand fumbled uneasily among the rags of her scant dress, folding and unfolding the wornout material.

The arch was a passage-way for servants, porters and tradesmen, under a large hotel, and in its shadow, leaning against the stones, stood an old man whose sightless eyeballs rolled vacantly. A gray frieze bag, from which projected a bow and the slender top of a violin, hung from his neck. His hands were folded listlessly, and his face was as passive as though it had been wrought in marble. He was evidently very tired, as was the girl, who soon grew weary of speculating upon the weather, and turned her glance to other objects. She thought how bright were the three gilt balls opposite, wondered if they were gold, wondered why so many pitiable objects wandered in and out over the muddy threshold beneath them, wondered if the carts and carriages kept up such a stream of travel all night—if that girl in the jaunty cap and feather, that nodded, not of its own accord, but by the motion of the carriage, towards her, was not a princess, such as the children talked about down in Pop Court; wondered, as the twilight faded faster and fast-

er, and the shops were lighted up, till, as by magic, the dark street seemed illuminated as for a festival, what made the jays away at the corner, in the apothecary's store, turn yellow, and blue, and crimson, and if it was, as Mitty Morgan said, the "stuff folks took in their innards, when they were sick?"

At that moment sounded the gong overhead—a long, doleful, shivering reverberation, that awoke all the echoes of the old court. Flor started, and the tambourine gave a musical gurgle. She had to stand aside now, for the stream of workmen who had been repairing some part of the place was coming out—a rough harsh chorus of voices, all talking together. The child stood there and looked thoughtfully on.

"I wonder where they all go to?" she queried. "I wonder if they've all got little children? How funny everybody would look with all the little children in the world, standing together! I wonder where they would stand?"

The thought caused her to chuckle merrily to herself. Some one a little rougher than his fellows, pushed against her; she drew her slight form up and shook her head with a sort of child-dignity, that, if one had not known the reason for it, seemed ludicrous pantomime. Then, with one thrust of her hand towards the graceless fellow, she turned to the dark corner where the old man kept his place.

"How are you, gran'paw?" she asked, in a merry voice.

"I'm right well, child. Where have you been?"

"Nowhere but here. How it did rain! but it only drops now and then. I say, gran'paw, if I'd only had an umbrella, I'd have taken a walk. Don't you like the rain? I do; I put my head out and let it patter on it. Are you cold?"

"No, child; but is it quite dark?"

"Dark as pitch, only for the lights.

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They stream over here—way to my feet; even the dirty little puddles are full; every shop window is blazing, and they have got some nice things for Christmas. And if I earn anything extra, I know what I'll buy. I've seen her—with cheeks as red as roses, and eyes as bright as stars—and I'll buy her!"

"Poor child!" sighed the old man, "I think shoes before dolls; they're almost gone, I know."

"Only the toes, gran'paw, and who cares for toes? Besides, they're not out, yet; they're only cracking. But you know supper's begun—they've got nicely seated at the table now, my little Red-Riding-Hood, and all—my handsome man with the black whiskers, and my beautiful lady, who *always* smiles at me—come, gran'paw, give me your hand; here we are." And counting the steps for his guidance, they moved slowly up into the spacious and well-lighted vestibule of the great hotel.

Taking their position near the door of the dining-room (the outer door was swung back and fastened; only the green baize intervened between them and the gay groups within), the old man, after drinking in the summer warmth through every fibre of his spare frame, loosened the mouth of the bag, and took therefrom a dainty little instrument, yellow and shining, while the girl Florence shook her tambourine a little, and kept her eyes fixed in the direction of the door, that she might, every time it was thrown open, catch one glimpse of the beauty and grandeur within.

For, with its three great chandeliers lighted, throwing a soft yellow lustre over the wide room, shining on hundreds of richly-dressed women, on the silver and the glass of the long tables—it was to the cold and hungry child like a glimpse into paradise. She forgot all her little troubles—forgot that she was alone and a wanderer. There sat that beautiful child, with the little red sash tied daintily around her white frock, and crimson knots on each shoulder. That child and its mother were Flor's little Red-Riding-Hood and the beautiful lady. It made her heart leap almost to her throat, when the supper was ended, and she stood shyly back, and yet near enough to receive one smile from the beautiful lady. It seemed to her that she had, somewhere in her life, in a sort of misty far-reaching consciousness, such as we elder people often

experience, loved and been loved by that woman. That her dark soft eyes had bent towards her filled with the tenderest light, such as only the caress of an innocent child calls forth.

The old blind fiddler did his best that night.

"That fellow is a study," one said to another. Two young men had left the *table-d'hôte* early. "I'd give a good deal if Wessing would put him in marble. He's a pious old mendicant, you may bet."

"How in the world did the man with a head like that, come to such a pass? He plays remarkably well—and the girl is not bad looking."

This Florence heard, while her nimble little fingers plied the tambourine, and the bit bells kept up their sweet tintinnabulation.

"She is a sort of protegee of Mrs. Walters, isn't she?"

"I don't know; the lady has been getting up a contribution for her," said the second speaker.

"By the way, who is this Mrs. Walters?"

"O, a rich widow—and yet as poor as a church mouse. Her husband was Walters, the great hemp contractor—worth his millions; but the old heathen tied up his money so in his will, that while the child is under age, the mother cannot actually do more than board and dress in the style to which she has been accustomed. Don't you see the cunning of the old fellow? No man would marry her under those conditions; so he keeps the money-hunters off. Bright thought in him."

At this moment the green doors were thrown back by the obsequious waiters, and the brilliant throng came out and began slowly ascending the great staircase. Flor stood back holding her breath, almost—her great dewy eyes, eager, yet half frightened, roving from face to face, as if she were reading there the destinies of each. To her, the multitude seemed like so many princes and queens; she had heard often of these royal personages in Pop Court. Well that the child could not see, under that outward show, the folly, the pomp, pride and vain glory of that miniature world. The gambler, the debauchee, the killer of reputations, the frivolous-minded worldling—all were there—the pure and the good were but the few among many.

One of these was the "beautiful lady,"

who glided out like an angel, holding little Red-Riding-Hood" by the hand.

"Here is something for your old grandfather, my dear—and come early Christmas morning."

She was gone, the child looking curiously back over its scarlet shoulders, and slowly, slowly the two seemed to melt away in the long distance.

"O gran'paw, there's lots of money here!" cried the little girl, breathlessly. "Have you got a whole pocket? O dear! I'm so afraid it will be stolen! Yes, that pocket is safe, and I shall watch you the whole way home; so don't be a bit afraid," she ran on, inserting a finger carefully through the gaping dingy lining of the old man's vest pocket, and cautiously depositing the bills. "O gran'paw, isn't it nice and warm here? don't you dread to go out into the cold, dark, sloppy street? Well, well, give them one more—there's a few gentlemen in there, now, and people are crossing all the time. O, where *do* such a many people sleep?"

It was an old aria, well worth hearing. In the middle of it the baize door opened, and two or three gentlemen sauntered out. Florence was looking the other way, but as she turned her glance she caught her breath, ceased her brilliant thrumming, and stood like one stupefied. Then she dashed down the tambourine, which fell with a loud crash of all its metal bells.

## CHAPTER II

### IN ROOM NO. 92.

DOWN the hall she sped, after the two figures retreating so rapidly. One of them seemed almost to fly. Not so fast, however, but that all suddenly his arm was caught, and a dead weight hung thereon—a little gasping sobbing breath made him shiver.

"O Hubert!" the cry rang out, "I knew you—I *knew* you! Here I am, safe—I was never drowned, Hubert."

The slight elegant-looking young man shook his arm angrily, but could not shake her off—could not stop that wild sobbing repetition of his name.

"Is the thing crazy?" laughed his companion.

"Heaven knows. Be off with you, girl. What are you hanging to me for? I don't know you."

"O Hubert, because I am so dirty and ragged! I did try so hard to keep clean, but they were all so poor! We had no money, you know—no money; but they were so good to me—and I had to play in the street, or I should have starved, you know. I am little Flor, and I'm nine years old now. I didn't forget you—I've never forgot you. O do, *do* believe me—I am—I am little Flor—you must believe me, Hubert!"

"Upon my word, a consummate little actress," said Hubert's friend, "or—there's something in it."

"She's crazy," whispered the other, aside. "I'll give her some money—I'll soothe her. See here child—my room is No. 92. I'm not going there now, but—here, John"—to a waiter—"show this little one in 92. I'll be there in a few moments." And languidly moving off, he took his way to the office where he was to bid his friend adieu.

"Well, well! that's a curious circumstance," said the latter. "How did the creature know your name?"

"O, she has found it out in some way. The old fellow was an accomplice, probably, and he has taught her this. Not a bad-looking child, eh? Pah! so dirty, though. All these wandering brats are cunning. They have to be, I suppose, poor devils!"

There was a strange expression in the young man's cold blue eyes. Handsome eyes they were—large, liquid, and at times gentle and beautiful as the eyes of a dove; indeed, the whole face was singularly handsome, and though the man was over twenty, he did not look much older than a youth of eighteen. In figure, as I have said, he was slight and willowy, but there was a promise of more generous proportions. He was not a common-looking man, this John Hubert Irvington—not a man with a cunning face, square shoulders, from which his coat hung in wrinkles, or broad vulgar brow—but every whit the gentleman; one that you might suppose had never seen the inside of anything less pretentious than a four-story brick house; one that would cross over to save the soles of his shining shoes from a dirty puddle. Little Flor followed the waiter to room No. 92. The child's heart was beating as it never had before, and her sensitive organism was strung up almost to rapture. She had found one she had been watching for, for three

long years. He didn't remember her yet—of course not; and she glanced with a look of shame, at her mean garments. O, if she could only have been neat and nice when he saw her—he who had seen her under such different circumstances.

And to enter this beautiful room—this “one of the places where they all slept”—instinctively she pressed her hands hard against the sides of her dress, and wished she were anywhere else. The waiter left her, closing the door. Flor gazed eagerly about her. Dimly remembering former splendors, the great carved bedstead, the shining satin hangings, covered with foamy white lace, the large oval mirror, the richly-colored carpet, in which she would have been pleased to hide her nearly wornout shoes, did not affect her as an unaccustomed sight, vagrant though she was; but still it seemed to her like a picture in a dream. She thought not once of the blind old man she had deserted; her soul was cognizant of only one object—the man upon whose arm she had hung.

“No wonder he didn't know me,” she said to herself, “But he will—he will! and O, he'll be so glad! I know—he'll take me with him, perhaps—yes, of course he will. And just as soon as he sees me in nice clothes, he'll be glad I found him. Why, I'm ever so much taller,” she went on, gazing at herself in the glass, tearing the faded gaudiness from her neck, where she had slipped it off her head. “My hair was all curly then, and now it's cut off. My cheeks were red, too—poor papa used to call me his little rosebud. Now wont the folks in Pop Court be sorry they didn't believe me!” she cried aloud, her eyes shining like diamonds. “Now what'll they say, to see his carriage drive up, and me stepping in, as grand as a princess, all in my new clothes? To be sure, he wasn't my very own brother, but papa always told me I must love him as well. O, what good times we used to have, before that awful day! And poor papa?” Her little bosom heaved with a convulsive sob. She stood there for a moment, the picture of childish woe, not hearing the door open; but presently she turned.

The young man had entered, and was leisurely taking off his coat. He seemed to avoid looking at her; he was silent; not a sound was heard save the creaking of his shoes. With the same immobility of coun-

tenance, he laid his coat upon an arm-chair, took down an elegant dressing-gown, deliberately arrayed himself in it, tied the two crimson cords together, fastidiously arranged the great silken tassels side by side, placed his cap on gently, went to the closet, took from thence a pair of velvet slippers, inserted his feet within, and finally, after a long fidgeting search, drew a slender cigar from a pretty little case that adorned the mantel-piece, as slowly lighted a match, and, seating himself with the utmost deliberation, began to smoke, and as coolly to survey the child.

The poor thing stood there, trembling in every limb. This was something so different from the pretty little visions she had been indulging in—this was something so very, very different! She turned red in the face, feeling the crimson mount to the very roots of her hair; her eyes fell; she seemed to be one enormous pulse, beating with an awful rapidity, and going to stop entirely soon.

And still that face opposite her stared and glared between the gray-white clouds of smoke. She wished herself anywhere but here. Pop Court was paradise to this. A sense of this man's injustice towards her, though he had said nothing, burned hotly in her poor little bosom. She clenched her hands. She wanted to pinch, to strike, to punish him in some way. I am afraid that for a few moments she wished him in Pop Court, and somebody was pommelling him.

And still he smoked on—still those eyes, so large and perfectly-shaped, looked her through and through, as though in each iris were points of steel. The child wanted to cry, to scream, to run. Her lip quivered, the hot tears started and stood trembling on her eyelids; she was wounded—it was deadly cruel to treat her so like a dumb soulless animal. At last he took the cigar from his lips.

“Well,” he said, in low, clear, but cutting tones, “you are about over it now, I suppose.”

She lifted her eyes a moment—they fell as suddenly, and tears fell, too—tears hot from the fount of outraged feeling. It was evident she did not know what to say—that she was entirely at his mercy now.

“See, you little beggar, what did you mean, telling me that miserable story down stairs? If you had been a boy, I'd have

shaken your life out of you. . What did you mean, you brat?"

"O—Hubert—I—" And the tears came with almost a scream.

"None of that!" He leaned both hands on the table—his cigar was slowly dying out, and the ashes were as dead as her hopes now. "None of that, you cursed little impostor, or I'll horsewhip you on the spot!" He pointed to a delicate riding-whip hanging from some article of furniture near, and the child cowered at his now tigerish-looking eyes, at the same time backing away from him almost imperceptibly. "And see here,"—he spoke again—"if ever you cross my path, if ever by word, look or deed, you pretend to know me, if ever you *dare* shame me again by any of your low-lived exhibitions for the purpose of getting money out of me, I'll shoot you, as sure as I live!"

"But," quivered the child's lips.

"None of your cursed impudence, I tell you! How you learned that story, I can't tell, and I don't care; but listen to me. You are some beggar's brat, do you hear? Flor Ivington was drowned—deep, deep fathoms under the ocean. Do you take me for a fool? You and that old impostor are leagued together, I suppose. Look out, or I'll have you both in jail; do you hear? in jail. I could easily put you there to-night—easily go out here and call a policeman; and he'd never listen to you, but carry you off instant. I won't do that *this* time; I'll let you go, though you've mortified me enough. But the next time, beware!"

The child had been moving uneasily back, step by step. She had brought her hands together, the little fingers working over each other in a piteous way; but at the mention of the word jail her whole frame seemed to collapse, and her white and frightened face took on another shade of fear. Her lips were pressed together unchildishly, and, as her tormentor lifted his graceful figure, she cried out in anguish, and turned to the door.

"Stop!" said the voice that in its forced and unnatural key would haunt her forever; and again she was powerless to move.

"You understand all I have been telling you?" he said, coming up and standing between her and the door.

"No, I don't, and I won't! and I want to

go!" cried the child, with hysterical vehemence, darting first on one side, then on the other, in her efforts to reach the door.

"See here, my young lady, this won't do," he said, enforcing his declaration by a frown and a stamp of the foot, as he stretched out one white hand and laid it with a vicelike grasp upon her shrinking shoulder. "I repeat, you understand what I have said?"

"Yes sir," said the child, sobbingly.

"You are never to try that game again."

She shook her head, still cowering.

"Or—remember—the jail! Now you can go."

"Of course she's an impostor," he said, angrily, when the room was emptied of her presence. And he walked to and fro impatiently, as though pursued by an invisible power. "Nothing easier than that for one of those emigrant children to do. They needed but a small memorial—the knowledge of her name, for instance—a trinket or so. She was with them a great deal—always a child of such tastes. Flor!" he exclaimed, growing more energetic as he talked, "she to palm herself off for a thing of beauty like that! This, a scraggy big-eyed girl, lean and lantern-jawed—that, a creature of fairy loveliness hard to be paralleled. Nonsense! I should have been an infernal fool if I had minded her. I might have given the thing some money, though."

He hurried to the door. Nobody there but a well-dressed waiting-maid, receiving some orders from beautiful Mrs. Walters, whose room was next door.

"Be sure and let her in when she comes on Christmas," he heard the latter say.

Nobody there, in all the brilliantly-lighted hall; the nuisance had gone. It was not at all likely he would ever meet with it again. So he went back to his cigar and his luxurious quiet.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "JUST AS HAPPY."

THE child had no name for that fashionable disaster that happens to so many more favorably situated—a broken heart. But nevertheless, she knew that a dull smothered pain seemed to tear at her vitals in that region, and her poor little life had grown suddenly as black and dreary as

Egyptian darkness. There are no words in the language with which to depict the peculiar suffering of such a child. No faith to console, no wisdom to correct—nothing but the ruin of all its beautiful hopes lying at its feet; its little spirit wounded almost unto death; its weak and ill-nourished body trembling as one in the last mortal pangs of dissolution; everything black, blank—lost.

Her case was yet more wretched. She had no mother to go to in her miserable home; no miserable mother, even, who, amidst the fumes of the poisonous liquors she has been imbibing, still has something of the mother's love for her wretched child, and a shoulder on which, maudlin though she may be, she can let the little face fall and sob its piteous grief out in her ear.

Flor's first emotion as she crossed that threshold was hate of the deadliest kind. She could have seen him struck down just then with a savage joy. She was only a human child, accustomed to the exhibition of the lowest passions in men and women, though her intimacy with the old blind fiddler had saved her from losing faith in her kind. She lifted her hand and shook it at the door with all the indignant vehemence she could command.

"I hate you! I hate you! I hate you, you wicked man!" was all she cried, in a voice suppressed and changed, under her clenched teeth. "I'll never speak of it again; I'll never tell *anybody* of it again. They may ask me and ask me—I'll die first!" she kept on, under her breath, as she went slowly down the stairs. "I expect everybody has laughed at me; I know they all have in Pop Court; but I'll never speak of it again, so help me—God!"

She started at this; started, flushed and stood still, frightened at herself. What had she said? Was it a vow that to break would peril her soul? Yes, she believed that. Reverence was one of her redeeming qualities. It was so prominent that, but for counterbalancing traits, it would have made of her nothing but an abject slave, a superstitious puppet. She had retained the memory of her early teaching, terrible as the ordeal of the past three years had been.

"There?" she exclaimed, "now I'm bound. Now I daren't, if they tore me in pieces. Well, it's just as well; it couldn't

do me any good. My beautiful lady would not believe me, perhaps, any more than the rest of them. They say I'm proud and take on airs, in Pop Court, only because I told them the truth, and call me the ragged princess." She stopped to gulp down a great lump that seemed to come up obstinately in her throat, then hurried faster. "And there's poor old gran'pap, I'd forgotten him: O dear, dear, I do wish I was dead with papa! There's no harm of my saying it to myself. There aint any use to live, as I see."

She went quietly across the great hall, quickened her pace at a harsh "be off with you, baggage!" from one of the servants, hastened to the green baize door. Nobody was there. Her heart beat with terror. Had she left this good old man to be ejected from the place, turned into the damp wet streets, with money in his pocket, and no one to protect him? A dark and woeful evening it was, crowded with unkindness, and neglect, and cruelty; but her treatment of her good old friend seemed to her the worst thing of all. She flew to the entrance, sprang down the steps, turned into the arch, and there, with a cry of delight, saw her friend and protector standing patiently in his old place, the woollen bag hanging from his neck, her tambourine in one hand, the other thin and bony fingers held hard against the little treasure under his ragged vest.

"O gran'pap!" cried the child; and leaned her head against him, crying in an agony of grief and joy as if her heart would break.

"Why, child, child?" He patted her on the shoulder. "What's the matter, and where's ye been?"

"O gran'pap—never mind." She raised her hand and wiped her streaming eyes with the little faded handkerchief. "I've—I've—only been to see somebody, you know—that is, I thought I'd seen him before, but I was—I *might* have been mistaken. No matter; don't let's talk of it. We'll go home and make a good fire—O, you must be so cold! But it doesn't rain; we won't get wet. We'll—we'll go home—and—be happy—won't we, gran'pap?"

"Eh? why shouldn't we, child? There's a reason—I see it in your voice; what's gone and happened, eh?"

"Never mind, gran'pap; we'll go home to Pop Court, and nobody shan't trouble

us. Here's my hand. And we'll stay all our days in Pop Court, wont we? Where I'll be the ragged 'princess,' whether my fortune comes or not. It's a good place—that is, when we have a fire, you know. And this money in your pocket—O, we shall be happy."

"The voice, the voice!" mumbled the old man.

"And you shall teach me how to play the fiddle beautifully, gran'paw, and by-and-by we'll get another, and you and I go playing. You see we shall make money; but we'll always stay in Pop Court," she added, hastily, "you and I. And I hope we shall live a great many years, to make each other happy, and then—and then—die together!" she cried, with a hysterical effort to keep her voice even; but it broke down, and the old man muttered:

"Ah, the poor child! the poor child!"

"No, no, you mustn't say that, or I shall be very angry," cried Flor, quite calm again. "I'm not a poor child. Didn't I have some money given to me? and didn't my beautiful lady tell me to call on Christmas? and maybe she'll give us a chicken. If she don't, we can buy one—just for once—and Mitty Morgan will cook it for us in her great stove. Pooh! I'm just as happy!" And the poor child dashed at a new installment of tears with a savage purpose that left her eyes red with the blow.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### FLOR AT HOME.

POP COURT, or Poplar Court, ran from a by-street at the lower end of the city. The by-street was one of the minor passages leading from the wharves, and night and day a never-ceasing thunder rumbled in the vicinity, and a never-ending stream of drays, presided over by swarthy men in blouses, toiled along its uneven stones, loaded with enormous boxes, and bales, and cordage, and whatever the great ships brought from over the sea. The pinched white faces that looked out of the numberless muddy windows, rejoicing in here and there a whole pane of glass, regaled their hungry vision with great loads of oranges, or cords of ham, or bundles of foreign fruit now and then; and it really seemed to be a satisfaction to the poor souls, who seldom possessed a fragment of all the lux-

uries they saw. In this vicinity lived itinerant musicians and travelling-peddlers; here and there a Jew's assortment of old clothes, displayed in narrow windows, gave conclusive evidence that Israel's children had not forgotten their ancient trade of barter. Topsy-looking grocery shops inhabited the corners, under whose beetling brows passed shabby men, entering with something of manliness, coming out with sheepish faces and red eyes, that looked furtively about, fearful of some shrewish wife who might be lurking there, ready to pounce upon them.

The inhabitants of Pop Court were still lower in the social scale, and the narrow grim houses, crowding each close upon the other, were rich in rags floating from windows and strung across lines, from shutter to shutter, flapping, and writhing, and fluttering in the cold December wind; rattling with a ghastly sound where they were frozen quite stiff, suggesting the odd idea of a lot of inanimate bodies, that had been rescued from watery graves, and hung out to dry.

The presence of a moon, struggling through wide rifts of clouds, enabled little Flor to steer clear of the drifting humanity, and the broken steps and hidden gutters in the way. It shone upon her quaint little figure and the tall spare frame of the old fiddler, as they took the middle of the passage and moved onward to the mouldy old tenement that ended the court, by stretching its crumbling ribs from side to side, and seeming to uphold all the other houses by its faded assumption of dignity. Presently they had opened the crazy door and propitiated the tottering wooden steps by the most careful movements, Flor going ahead, and the old man following. Up two flights of worm-eaten stairs, then into a large room that smelt of damp.

"I'll have a light in a minute, gran'paw; there, sit down. I know just where to put my hand on everything." And with this little assumption of womanly forethought, she struck the match, coughed a little as the brimstone ignited, and soon the tallow candle revealed the tidy wretchedness of the apartment.

Flor was down on her knees next, puffing at the open stove door, for she had laid all the sticks ready to be set blazing.

"I'm hungry, aint you, gran'paw? There is bread in the house, and now you're safe,

"I'm going out to get some butter. Come, let's count the money. Not many pennies and little bits to-day, on account of the rain; but that nice roll! You're sure you have got it? O yes, there it is!" she cried, as the old man produced the bills. And she drew a chair gravely up to the shaky table, then sat down, leaned her head heavily upon her hand, and forgot everything for a moment, wrapped in her own gloomy thoughts.

"Well, deary, how much?"

The voice of the old man recalled her to consciousness. She caught at the bills nervously, and pulled them apart.

"Five, six, seven—why, gran'pap, we're rich, we surely are rich! Seven, and I haven't done yet!" she exclaimed.

The old man leaned over, fixing his sightless eyes where he supposed the money to be.

"Eight, nine, ten, eleven—why, twelve dollars!" cried the child, breathlessly. And pushing them from her, she sat herself back in the chair, scarcely believing the evidence of her senses.

"Twelve dollars, eh? and Christmas on Monday!" ejaculated the old man.

"Was you thinking of a pudding, gran'pap? such as you used to have in the old country? You shall have it. Mitty Morgan's to have one, if she can find some one to go halves; for the whole would cost almost a dollar. And we'll buy a chicken—yes, we will—a little one; it will be splendid! A pudding, a chicken, and I to help in the cooking; for Mitty isn't exactly to be trusted, though she is a good cook. What a pity she *will* drink!"

"I was thinking, little one, that you must buy shoes."

"O, no matter for me," cried the girl, tying over her head the much-enduring handkerchief. "I don't care if I never have shoes; what's the use? I mean, gran'pap, what's the use of anything if—you're so poor that a little like that wont buy half you want. Now I'm going. Just come and turn the button; there's hard characters in this house, Mitty Morgan says."

The old man fumbled for the rest of the money, rolled it up in a little wad, and had just placed it snugly in its former resting-place, when there came a rap at the door.

"Well, I'm blessed!" cried a thick voice, as a small figure whisked in, pulling an

uncommonly large hat from an uncommonly small head, "I say I'm blessed if this don't look comfortable. Well, how are you to-night, grandpap?"

The new-comer smelt of gin, and the knees of his trousers shone like satin, while the wrinkles in his upper garment looked very old indeed. A sort of animated whiskey-bottle he was, after a grotesque Dutch pattern, and his voice gurgled very much like that liquid when it is poured out—the words running into one another.

"I'm well enough," was the reply of the old fiddler, who did not fancy his visitor.

"Well and comfortable, I should say so, well and comfortable. Well, she is a treasure of a housekeeper, I should say so. What a very nice thing to have some one to care for you, eh? a fire on the hearth, a singing kettle, and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"She's a good little girl," echoed the old man.

"Good's a beggar to it; she's an angel chopt down, as it were, right into one's mouth, and you're lucky, grandpap. I'm afraid you aint thankful," he added, transforming himself into a jug by planting his right hand on his hip.

"What do you want?" asked the old man, curtly.

"O, what do I want? yes, you wish to know what I want. Well, business is what I want, of course. I never comes but I comes on business, do I? There's a lady—first quality—of my acquaintance that gives a Christmas party to her little girl. She speaks in the hearing of my cousin (genteel help) and wonders where she will get a fiddler for the dance, which comes off early, and, being old-fashioned, doesn't want a band, nor yet two instruments. So Jemima comes to me, and I says to Jemima, 'Consider old grandpap down in Pop Court as good as engaged. He'll do it, I know, and glad to turn an honest penny.' How do you like it, grandpap?"

"Well, I—like it," said the old man, slowly, "though I don't get the first price, if the money goes through your hands."

"Now that aint grateful—I say it as a friend—that aint grateful, old man. Don't I take the pains to mention it, and go out of my way to do it, and knowing fiddling Jimmy, too, who gets firstrate prices? But no, says I to myself, 'Grandpap's slim and



genteel-like, and his little lady'll fix him up scrumtious, an' he's blind, and—'

"And so you take advantage of him?" said the old man, bluntly.

"Now I'll be hanged!" cried the bottle, in a bluster. "I'll be hanged, if I ever see sich a chap! I'll go after the other one. I will—"

"And send a drunken man," said grand-pap; "for you know he aint never to be depended on. *That* would be fine. Well, I'm willin'."

"Suppose we go halves?" queried the other, who had risen, and stood hat in hand.

"If that's the best you'll do—yes."

"All right, then. In course the little

gall'll go with you, you bein' blind, and it will be as good as a play to her to see the fun—develop her faculties like."

"Yes, yes, she'll go," said the fiddler.

"Well, good-night, and bless you, bless you!" said the man, whose speech grew thicker every moment. "I'll send the number and the lady's name. Wish you merry Christmas." And away he went, zigzagging down the stairs.

"O gran'pap!" cried Flor, rushing in a moment after, her hands full of little paper parcels, "don't I wish we were rich, and had our own stairs? It must be such a comfort not to meet people who are tipsy going down!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## HAUNTED!

—OR,—

### FLORENCE IVINGTON'S OATH.

BY MRS. MARY A. DENISON.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### HAUNTED.

JOHN HUBERT IVINGTON had bought a house. A handsome house in the suburbs had long been to let, and the owner, despairing of getting interest on his property that way, had determined to sell.

John was a man who did not know he had nerves. He liked the place because it was capable of great improvements. Its situation just suited him—far enough from the road to ensure quiet, near enough to show with imposing distinctness. He got it at a bargain, too, cash down—serpentine walks, statuary, greenhouses and all. It mattered but little to him that the place was said to be unlucky; indeed, it derived an additional charm in his eyes from that fact. The man who had built it quarrelled with his wife. He was overheard by the neighbors swearing at her, about the disposition of certain improvements; he was seen sometimes, when the window shades were up, to thrash about the room as if anxious to find somebody to take up cudgels against; and when madam was found dead in her bed, one morning, although there was no existing proof that evil had been done, the people of Berylton considered that she had been foully dealt by, and only expressed their wonder that it didn't happen before, when, one morning some years after, the old man was cut down from a beam in his stable, "dead as a doornail."

From that time, all the inhabitants considered the house doomed, and whoever moved in soon moved out in disgust, having either seen something, or heard something, nobody quite understood what.

John had listened gravely when these things were commented upon, and smiled, as the widow in the house adjoining answered his questions with sincere faith in the genuineness of the sights, sounds, or

whatever they were, as she handed him the keys every now and then.

John always looked at a younger face, when he smiled—a face of a really beautiful girl of seventeen, the widow's only daughter.

"He seems to take a mighty fancy to you, anyway," said the widow, one day when they had been talking of him.

"I'm sure I hope not; I should not feel at all flattered."

Her mother looked up amazed.

"Why Angy, he's handsome, he's remarkably handsome."

"So everybody says—and so, indeed, he is, to those who like that sort of good looks; but there's something under it all, something hard and revengeful—at least, so it seems to me."

"Why, daughter," exclaimed the mild widow, "you can't mean it?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then how differently folks see! I thought he looked like a man almost too kind and indulgent; I thought him singularly beautiful. Well, well, there's no accounting for diversities of opinion. Your poor father used to say that I was a very poor judge of character. Perhaps you take after him, for I must say he read men as easily as one reads a book. How nicely he is fixing up! You can't deny that he has great taste."

Angy joined her mother at the window that overlooked that part of the estate which was under repairs. Nearly a score of workmen were busy at various points, some cleaning the walks, others trimming trees, others working upon the house-front itself.

As Angy stood there, intent on the scene, a very handsome man rode by on horseback touching his cap pointedly as he bowed to the two. Angy blushed and drew back.

"He seems determined to keep up the

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acquaintance," said the widow, smiling in a pleased way. "Well, I don't know why he shouldn't. We're his nearest neighbors, and your father held a high position in the legal world. There was not his equal, I believe; but his heart was so good, poor dear! that he couldn't keep money. Well, well, I hope the poor man may never repent of his bargain."

"It seems everybody has who has ever had anything to do with the gloomy old house. I wouldn't live in it, if they gave it to me," said the bright-faced girl, going back to her seat at an opposite window, overlooking her own little flower garden.

"I wouldn't live in it, if they gave it to me." How often, in the years that were to come, would she think of these lightly-spoken words, and feel herself powerless to control the fate that seemed even now dawning upon her! Light, careless, happy-hearted, she only saw the future through the sunbeams of her own girlish fancy, which was not quite free from "Love's young dream," childish as she was.

"At last!" said John Ivington, exultingly, standing on the threshold of his elegant drawing-room, surveying its decorations with a pleased though critical interest. "I couldn't have bought such a property as this with twice the money, in any other place in the country. Haunted! nonsense. I'll make it haunted by everything bright and beautiful. I'll haunt it with some of Wessing's statuary. The group of Faith, Hope and Charity shall stand there. Hum—I'll make it a present to *my wife*." And he smiled in a quiet pleased way. "To my wife; yes, she *shall* be my wife; her destiny is fixed. Strange that when I went to that old witch in Breslau, she should show me *that face*; but she did, upon my soul, she did! They say there's a young fellow comes here, a pupil of her father, I know; poor as a church mouse, dark and slightly saturnine in face, enough to give him a 'pleasantly devilish expression,' as my friend Hummel says, sometimes—just the man to interest a pretty girl. But he comes in vain; the young lady is spoken for."

He then threw himself down upon a couch covered with velvet, settled his head comfortably upon the carved wood-work, and began to form his plans. Opposite him loomed up the great mirror, a fixture in the walls that he allowed to remain, while the artisans worked delicately around

it. In this could be seen the long bright perspective of the handsome apartment, velvet, laces, silks and luxurious upholstery. The flowers in the carpet, the frescoes on the ceiling, the fine pictures, the elaborate workmanship of the imported mantel-piece, the costly ornaments above it, the huge silver-branched candelabras, all were reflected with an artistic minuteness that allowed no tint or shade to escape.

"A pretty girl, a beautiful girl, and by Jove, I love her! I love her, and I will have her! Did not the fates decide it, at Breslau?"

He was gazing languidly at the mirror, when suddenly he saw a man enter from the further side of the apartment—still in the mirror—and come slowly towards him. He would have turned but that he knew in that part of the room was neither door nor window. Besides, that figure was familiar to him, horribly familiar. It was that of a man small and spare of stature, of a remarkably benevolent expression, though at that moment the face wore a look of mingled regret and sternness. Small as it was, and at first it seemed a mere puppet, the features were distinctly marked, and the gray hairs upon the white benevolent forehead trembled to the little breeze that seemed stirring.

John Ivington gazed like one fascinated or entranced. He was not conscious of being frightened, though a slight chill made him shiver. He felt more like a man under some spell of curiosity and awe. Then the house was haunted, and yonder was a ghostly mirror.

The thin old man seemed to advance half way to the centre of the room; there he stood still, and throwing one arm forward, pointed towards a small misty cloud that could be seen now upon the mirror, as if some one had breathed upon it. Slowly evolving, one by one, came the outlines of a ship; more rapidly a tempest gathered. The surface of the glass seemed one vast ocean, broken with huge waves that reared their monstrous crests, and dashed against the doomed vessel. Evidently the storm was at its height. Crowds of frightened wretches appeared in groups about the decks—sailors sprang frantically from point to point, in obedience to hoarse orders, that, with the horrid shrieks of the blast, and the cries and prayers of the death-struck, made a hideous pandemonium of sound.

Suddenly the ship parted. Those who could swim battled bravely for life. Boats and pieces of spar, filled with clinging men, and women, and children, could be seen in all directions. One immense body of wood held but two, an aged man and a little child.

"We might save the child," cried an old salt, as they rode between huge billows, "but not the other. Does she belong to anybody here?"

"Madness to attempt it," muttered a young man who sat white as death, in the stern. And even in that awful time, he thought of the vast fortune that was his, if that little child sank under the boiling surf. He forgot his sacred trust, forgot his manhood, and did not cry:

"Save the little one; I am her protector. The debt of gratitude I owe the old man her father, cannot be repaid." He held his peace, like one of old, and suffered the timid and the selfish to have their own way.

"It's one of the emigrants," said another; "I remember seeing him in the steerage—the old fiddler. Ha, they are under, now!"

"Bear away!" cried the pilot; "there's no time to lose!" And the young man turned his head with his wicked thought, perhaps even daring to excuse himself.

He lived it all over, and grew deadly sick and chill, sitting there before the haunting mirror. At last, he ventured to look round. It was no illusion; there stood the venerable gentlemanly figure, and though through it could be seen the rich furniture and the opposite wall, still there it was, an accusing presence.

"What am I here for?"

John Ivington had not spoken.

"I am here to remind you of the past, to tell you that you have perjured your soul, but that there is forgiveness for you if you will be just. I was with you when my helpless little child asked for justice at your hands and found no mercy in a villain's heart. This splendor, the money that you lavish upon it, rightly belongs to her. I trusted you; too blindly I followed my own impulses. I believed you as honest as myself. Did I not take you from the slums of vicious poverty and make you as my own? Yes, as my son I educated you, gave you access to the best society, bestowed my confidence upon you—and how have you requited me for all? I tell you, man, I will haunt you to death! In all your pleasures, I will be beside you; in the silent night you

shall see me, and in the glare of midday. They call this house, that you have bought with my money, haunted. Every place to which you direct your footsteps shall be haunted, every pleasure you enjoy I will poison. I will stand beside your bridal, I will make desolate your household; I will trouble you while living, and dying, you shall not escape me, unless you make full restitution. My little innocent child you have subjected to all the galling restrictions of poverty. You have thrown her amidst the pollutions of a vicious neighborhood at nearly the age at which I rescued you. You have tortured a little heart that loved you singly and purely, you have taught it to hate and almost loathe your kind. Go and find that child, take her home, educate, clothe and feed her, I ask nothing more. You may keep her forever dependent upon your bounty. Hide the secret of her birth, if you will, but for the sake of God and your own honor, don't leave her among those terrible influences, where her soul and her purity are in danger! If you fail to do this, I tell you I will haunt this old house as it was never haunted before. Wife and children you may have, but misery shall follow in their footsteps and in yours. You shall not feel yourself alone in your most secret hours, but in the presence of an accusing spirit. With a hand of ice I will chill your blood, with a breath of fire I will inflame your soul, till between the two tortures, you go mad. In my life, I was quiet and retiring; but my will was iron, and my purpose relentless, though, thank God! both were turned in the direction of good. But I swear to you I will not let the darling of my old age, the one pledge of my only, early love, suffer through you. And the oath is registered in the high courts of heaven."

John Ivington arose, guilty, but not repentant. The thing—what was it but a shadow, after all? No one could see it but himself—no other person in the world would or could be cognizant of its presence. Should he, after three years of elegant ease, burden himself with this child? The matter was not to be thought of, not for a moment. The child came up before him as she looked that night—meagre, thin, ragged and dirty. He sickened at the recollection; his fastidious taste revolted. Beside, he chose to consider her an impostor. She was seen to go down—the waves had closed

over her, and this old man and vagrant wished to make money out of their knowledge. Besides, if he took the girl—if, indeed, she was rightfully the heiress of all this wealth, would not common gratitude exact a support for the blind old fiddler? The girl would not leave him, if he had been her benefactor. Indeed the whole thing involved so much thought, expense and trouble, that much the best way was to wash his hands of it, entirely, and let the shadow do its worst. It was, after all, only a shadow.

He started to walk down the parlor—a thin hand touched his shoulder, and through the broadcloth and lining, it felt cold, cold as an icy clod, and sent him thrilling and shivering backward. In vain he strove to shake it off; like a grip of iron it remained, rooting him to the floor. Every pore of his body exuded moisture, and every drop of sweat felt like a ball of ice. In utter agony, he opened his lips to say, "I will," when he started to his feet, and with a look of alarm, gazed down the apartment and—came to his senses, seeing one of the workmen regarding him curiously.

"I—I was fast asleep, eh?"

"Yes sir. Excuse me for the liberry, but I wished to consult you previous to going, and shook you by the shoulder—I'm afraid, rather roughly."

"O no, no—quite right. I'm very glad you did. It waked me from a troublesome dream. You were quite right. Haunted—ha, ha! by nightmares. Yes, mares that ride in the daytime, sometimes. I imagine every house haunted in the same way, eh?"

"I dare to say," returned the carpenter, seeing that this confidence warranted freedom. "I've often said I wished they'd give me the house, rent free, to live in; I'd not be afraid of all the ghosts they could raise. It was a pokerish place, though, when we began the repairs—so many odd nooks and corners. I wonder who had the planning of it?"

"By Jove, though," said the same man, a few moments afterwards (that is he used a rougher word than I feel at liberty to transcribe), "you never saw a scareder man than he was when he fust opened his eyes. I wonder what the chap had been dreaming? His under jaw looked fallen, like the jaw of a dead man, and for a minute, I was frightened."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CHRISTMAS TURKEY WHICH WAS A CHICKEN.

DESPITE the meagre furniture and cheerless walls, the old room in Pop Court took on a Christmas brightness. Flor had found two or three pink and yellow bills, setting forth the merits of some long-gone-by amusement, and had pasted them opposite the windows. With the sunshine falling upon them, the great black and red letters seemed like cheery sprites, dressed in their holiday uniform.

"They are comical little black men, dancing," said Flor, who was endeavoring to interpret them according to her own whimsical fancies; "and they are all going out to Christmas, gran'paw. One of them seems to have a great turkey in his hand, and I suspect he can't find a place to bake it in. I wish he'd pop it in our stove, don't you, gran'paw? Not but what we shall have our own turkey, for I am determined to call our chicken a turkey, gran'paw, for the sake of old times. O! I remember—"

Suddenly she clapped her hand over her mouth, stood breathless a moment, till the old man asked:

"Well, little one, what does 'ee remember?"

"Nothing, gran'paw—that is—you see—I think I've forgotten. It don't do me any good to, you know, to talk about things that's past and gone; you've told me so yourself—and—"

She had fixed her teeth—a look of quick passion darkened all the face that the poor old sightless eyes could not see—and the little clenched hands aimed impotent blows at the air; then she sank crouching on the floor, with a sudden bitter burst of tears.

"What's 'ee doing now, dear?" asked the old fiddler, suspiciously.

"I—I'm seeing to the potatoes," said the child, rising to her feet; controlling her voice with admirable firmness, plunging the old one-tined fork into the pot, whose cover she lifted.

"And I've got an excellent tablecloth, gran'paw. What do you think it is?" she continued, poking the fire a little, after her inspection of vegetables.

"Some of the neighbors lent it."

"Neighbors?" Poor Flor found relief in a short sharp laugh. "Why, gran'paw,

there's not a family in all Pop Court, I believe, that owns a tablecloth. Mitty Morgan had one, but she pawned it months ago, and so you see one of those great showbills covered the little table, beautifully! and the back of it is white and clean, and you can't think how nice it looks. And last night I bought some green tea—dear, how it did cost! but I only got a little, you know, because to-day was Christmas. We always used—” again she clapped her fingers over her mouth, with a scared look.

“But we haven't got no dishes scarcely,” said the old man, who loved to sit in the sunshine, and feel warm, and loving, and shadowy fingers touching his sightless eyes.

“I know—but I managed,” returned Flor, who by this time had dusted the bottom of the old broken-nosed teapot with a plentiful supply of odorous and crumpled leaves, of a rich olive green. “Next door lent me a dish or two, because she was going out to Christmas, and the little hunchback let me have two cups and saucers. They heard, some way, that we were going to keep Christmas, I suspect. Then when Mitty brings up the chicken—no, I say it's turkey—when she brings up the turkey, why, here's a big broken cup to put the gravy in. As to knives and forks, Mitty has promised to look after them. I'll tell you what I'm going to do, gran'paw; I'm going to buy two knives, and two forks, and two spoons, and two plates, and then we'll be stylish, wont we? Now you see I have to eat dinner at the second table, and I don't like it—of course, it's my own fault,” she added, in her little firm way, as old grandpaw suggested; “but do you think I would keep you waiting? As if I'd be so impolite! But then, you see, we can both eat together—when there's anything to eat,” she added, softly. That old blind man little dreamed that sometimes Flor had gone hungry that he might be fed, misled by the child's generous artifice.

Mitty came up in due time with the “turkey,” and a fine plump little “turkey” it was, to be sure. Flor hovered round it, admiringly.

“How nicely it's done! and O dear, how brown and beautiful it is; and how large for a chick—I mean a turkey that is a small one,” she added, laughingly.

Just as they were sitting down to dinner,

the Dutch dram-bottle made his appearance, with a large parcel, which with many bows, and “his 'specs to Miss Flo—he wished she'd 'cept.”

“Why, Tay,” cried Flor, extricating an immense mince pie from its wrappings, “how did you contrive to bring it?”

“How'd I c'trive to bring it?” queried the fellow, with an attempt at a maudlin laugh.

“Why yes, you're so tipsy!” said the child, with a candid emphasis.

“‘Tirely owin' to your goodness—Miss Flo—sister—genteel help—she bro-brought 'er brother two—an' he begs to 'c-cept it c-cause 's Christmas.”

“You'd better go home and go to bed, though I thank you, I'm sure.”

“Home an' bed—tha's jes' it—wish all merry Christm's—good-by.” And off he went, Flor expecting momentarily to hear him plunge head foremost, from the top to the bottom.

Mitty Morgan, a short, fat, vulgar, but good-natured looking woman, who boasted of having seen better times, was Flor's best friend in Pop Court. She it was who, when sober, crawled up into Flor's room after the old fiddler was asleep, and told her old store of fairy stories, occasionally suiting circumstances to present time and place; and Flor had grown very fond of her, though the child always sat with her face within her hands, for poor Mitty Morgan had degenerated from her high estate, whatever it had been, woefully, and when her breath did not smell of gin, it did of onions or garlic, all alike abhorrent to the delicate perceptions of poor little Flor, who remembered bitterly, but never now spoke of the old times.

“So you didn't go to the hotel this morning?” she said, as she sat back surveying the white bones of the victim she had slayed, cooked and eaten.

“O yes, I did,” said Flor, “but I was late. I didn't like to seem in a hurry, and so the time slipped by. When I went up, the girl told me Mrs. Walters had gone to church, and had taken my dear little Red-Riding-Hood; that she had something nice for me, but had forgot, and carried the key of her bedroom. But she told me to come again, and so I promised to go this afternoon. I don't care for what she'll give me,” Flor said again, in her pretty, spirited way; “but it will be delightful to see them both

together—my beautiful lady, and my darling little Red-Riding-Hood."

"Let me see, deary, isn't there anything nice I can lend you to wear?" queried Mitty Morgan, looking round distressfully. "Ah, ah, if we were only made of gold?"

"And could clip a little piece off," laughed Flor, "every time you wanted, and it would grow again."

## CHAPTER VII.

### KEEPING THE VOW.

"My darling, hand this to the little girl, and tell her it is something mamma and little Florence bought for her."

Flor had not taken her eyes from the lovely child since she had seated herself at Mrs. Walters's request. Now she started and flushed, and her lip quivered.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" the lady asked again, noticing a new and singular expression in the face of the child.

"To hear you call her what once my papa called me," cried Flor, the tears starting.

"Why! is your name Florence?"

"They call me Flor," said the child, coldly, remembering her vow, and, with a resolute effort, driving back the tears.

"I had a sister named Florence, and that was my mother's name, too. Wout you tell me something about yourself? Is your mother dead? Are both your parents dead? I have thought that perhaps that old man was not related to you, I don't know why."

Flor looked down, and was silent; struggling how hard Heaven only knew, to keep her vow—the promise that seemed so binding and so awful. If she could only tell this sweet kind heart her sad story! But then if she had, the little romance of her life would have stopped here.

"You have nothing to tell me, my dear?"

Flor shook her head.

"Poor thing!" thought Mrs. Walters, "her story, likely enough, would be one of misery, exposure, perhaps of sin. Better for us both that she keep silent."

"Well, my dear, you shall take your time about telling me. If ever you feel like it, remember that I am your friend. I have always liked you because of your habitual neatness. Poorly as you have been

dressed, your little hands have been clean and white, and your pretty hair always smooth. I have but little money to give, though I live in this great house; but I have time, which is more valuable, sometimes, than money, and a great deal of patience. Before this blessed Christmas, I said to myself, that I wished to benefit some one, and Heaven put you in my mind. I had some thoughts of asking you to come and take care of Pet."

At this the little one smiled like an angel. The tears came again in Flor's eyes.

"O, it would be beautiful!" she cried. "O, I should like it so much!—but—gran'papa—" Her voice died away.

"Do you support him, child?"

"O, I could do nothing but for his beautiful music! My tambourine only helps a little; but he is blind, and I have taken care of him—since, ever since—he—saved me—from—drowning."

"And he blind, child? is it possible? How did he save you?"

"Please, I'd rather not tell," gasped Flor. This trial was almost too much for her.

"Never mind," said the gentle lady, "some other time, perhaps. Well, here is a nice suit of strong warm clothes; a little hood that will keep your head warm, and a waterproof cape, that will prevent the rain from soaking in."

"O thank you! thank you!" cried Flor, with brilliant eyes. She longed to get away somewhere, and have a long childish cry. It seemed as if in no other way could she express her delight. "How good you are!" she said again, with quivering lips.

Something in the expression of the child's face touched Mrs. Walters, who bent down and kissed the white forehead.

"And I suppose you don't go to school?" she said, keeping the tears from her own eyes.

Flor shook her head.

"Gran'papa wanted me to, but who would take care of him? He is too old to leave so long. But I can read all the papers, and I can even write a little. When I was a bit of a girl I printed my own name."

"If you could spare an hour to come here every day," said Mrs. Walters, "I would teach you to write, and some other things. I can give you books, too."

"O, how good you are!" Flor exclaimed again, chokingly.

"Do you think you can?"

"O, I must! yes, I know I can. Gran'-pap will be so glad?"

"Very well, we'll fix upon the hour sometime. You may go now, for I am getting my little Florence ready for a children's party. It's a silly affair, I think; Flory is too little, but Mrs. Beachman would not take no for an answer."

"Is it *there*?" cried Flor.

"Why?" queried Mrs. Walters, glancing up, surprised.

"Because, gran'pap is going to play, and I'm to go to take care of him," cried Flor, rapturously.

"Well—indeed—then the new clothes will come quite in play. You have never seen a children's party, I suppose?"

"O yes!" cried Flor, eagerly, "I had one myself—when—papa—" She stopped, confused and frightened. "I forgot," she said, firmly, looking up in a piteous appealing manner to the bright face above her; "I must never speak of that."

"Of *what*, my dear?"

Flor only shook her head, and retreated towards the door. Mrs. Walters thought it some childish freak, or point of honor, and forbore, with true womanly delicacy, to question her further. So Flor went home with her clothes, that grandpap tried his best to see through her tongue, and Mitty Morgan came up to dress her, adding here and there a pretty bow of blue ribbon, which she said she had saved from those better times.

"I always knew, my dear, that some good fairy would take pity upon you, and make you a little princess at last—a *real* princess."

"Not the ragged princess of Pop Court," cried Flor. "But they can't call me the *ragged* princess any longer now, can they?" And she looked herself over admiringly.

"Only when you get your fortune that the good fairy is going to give you, you must not forget me," said Mitty, kissing her.

"No, never!" cried Flor, fervently.

What a scene of enchantment for the poor little princess of Pop Court! She sat in a pretty little alcove with the old fiddler, keeping time with her little tambourine, her eyes fastened upon the throng of bright and happy children, decked in holiday attire. Mrs. Walters came and spoke to her at refreshment time, and that made her supremely happy; but the crowning joy was to hold little Red-Riding-Hood, who had fallen fast asleep, in her arms, while her beautiful lady went up stairs for her shawl and hood; and as little Flor begged to carry the child to the door, it was allowed, and, unseen, she imprinted a kiss upon the angelic forehead.

When she was gone, Flor felt no sympathy for the gay scene, and she was glad when at an early hour the party broke up, and she led the old blind fiddler home again.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



## HAUNTED !

—OR,—

### FLORENCE IVINGTON'S OATH.

BY MRS. MARY A. DENISON.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR LAWYER.

THE Widow Collins owned the pretty little cottage next to the Wyllies Estate, as the great house had been called in former years, but which the present proprietor, who had a fondness for musical names, had christened Willoway. An avenue of beautiful willows extended from the wood to the porch on the west front, so that the name seemed appropriate.

The little cottage was a very pretty set-off to the larger and more pretentious mansion, it was kept so beautifully neat. The old lawyer had spent a great deal of money in ornamenting the grounds, and placing here and there an unpretending piece of statuary, or a mimic arbor, or a little grotto of shells. That, and the aid her only son afforded her from an ample salary, supported her in comfort, and provided also for the little wants of the two sisters, Angy and Mary Collins. Mary was now visiting some relatives in the South; Hal the brother never came out, save fortnightly on Saturday night; and there were few visitors presented themselves at Eden Lodge, as Angy laughingly called it.

"You see, Mr. Ivington; it is built just where the lodge ought to be," she said, laughingly, to John Ivington, who had just dropped in one evening; "and a house like yours needs just such an appendage."

"It needs two or three appendages," said John, meaningly; and then thought how perfectly the face resembled that of the old witch's incantations at Breslau.

It was a pretty, winsome face, seen under the light of the clear astral, and Angy was not at all unaware of her attractions. She glanced up with an arch smile, and down again with a conscious blush, for she read that in the man's eyes she did not care to see.

She had known him now for two months. Sometimes he came over to bring her a few choice flowers, sometimes to bring a book, or borrow one from her father's library, which still maintained its old place in Eden Lodge, sometimes to proffer a present of fine fruit—and by the widow, who hoped with all her heart that Angy would fancy this rich young man, was always received with a warm welcome.

One evening he looked in at the door, catching sight of the widow's black robes, and a portion of Angy's white dress.

"May I come in?" he asked, laughingly; "I'm so lonesome at Willoway."

"Certainly," said the widow; but there seemed to be an indecision in her voice, perhaps a regret.

He entered; Angy had risen in some confusion, from a seat very near that of a tall, slender dark-eyed man, and was coming forward.

"I beg pardon—I intrude?" exclaimed John Ivington, a shadow clouding his face for a moment.

"O no, Mr. Ivington!" said Angy, her woman's tact covering all embarrassment. "I'm very glad you came; we were just wishing some friend would come in, were we not, Seymour? This is Mr. Seymour Hurst—Mr. John Ivington."

"O, we're very glad indeed?" seconded the widow, quite at her ease, as the two young men shook hands with great apparent cordiality, "for my son sent us some excellent oysters, by Mr. Hurst, and, as Angy says, we were wishing a friend would drop in. I think you must have been impressed," she added, laughingly.

"I was," John answered, in a graver manner than usual. "It's very odd, but I had some prime oysters sent out to-day, and my new cook spoiled them in the cooking. I threw them all away."

"Then you shall have an opportunity of

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judging of my skill in the culinary department," said the widow. "I never allow any one to touch oysters over the fire but myself, and I'm going out to superintend this minute. It's nine now, ten will be time enough, I suppose. Meanwhile, Angy, entertain the gentlemen, till I return with something more substantial."

"Which means keep the animals good-natured till feeding-time," laughed Seymour Hurst. "Well, I for one shall not object to my keeper; what say you, Mr. Ivington?"

There was something John did not like in the tone of this young man; a sort of proprietor's interest, a familiarity that was intensely disagreeable to him. The pleasantly saturnine look, too, he acknowledged was something to fascinate and control. The dark eyes, so full of power, massive brow shaded by heavy curling locks of black hair; the flexible lips, pointed chin and aquiline nose—the ever-varying sparkling expression of the whole countenance, making it a fascinating study. Then and there he took an unconquerable dislike to Seymour Hurst. And his dislike culminated before the pleasant little supper came on. To be sure Mr. Hurst was properly appreciative of the proprietors. He called Angy miss, was fastidiously polite in his attentions, but for all that, Mr. Ivington chose to see strong grounds for jealousy in everything he did. It was hardly to be wondered at, since young Hurst wore his superiority with a modest grace that did him credit. Handsome as John Ivington undoubtedly was, one would scarcely look in his face a second time, in the presence of Seymour Hurst. John Ivington was jealous at first sight, but it was hard work to control his feelings during the whole of that memorable evening. The little cottage-piano had never given forth such melodious tones as when it vibrated under the touch of genius, while Seymour Hurst sat before it. His voice, too, how rich and expressive! There was little doubt but that he loved Angy Collins—there was no doubt at all when John Ivington heard him sing.

And did—did she love this poor lawyer? this genius working under difficulties, and struggling for a competence? Her eye fell before his, but that was sometimes the case when John Ivington addressed her. Angy was a bit of a coquette, though she would never have acknowledged it. It

was very natural, poor child. She could no more help trying to make herself agreeable than she could help living. She liked to entertain and to please. Perhaps her love of approbation was too largely developed; if so, she paid dearly for it in her after life.

But in the treatment of this young student there was a deference, a frankness and gentle timidity, that to see and admit was gall and wormwood to impetuous proud John Ivington. And that night of all others Seymour exerted himself. He had heard of this attractive moneyed man: this man who could live in the midst of splendor, and so shine and dazzle—but not out of the luxury and greatness of his own nature, and he was not going to be thrown into the shade by a man who was merely a millionaire, and presumed upon his wealth. He had, too, a lurking fear that the girl he loved might be lured by this false glitter, and he wished to set before her in startling contrast the merits of the two men.

"I'm hoarse," he said, rising from the instrument, and sauntering towards the centre-table filled with albums and books in expensive binding. "Mr. Ivington will entertain you now; you play, do you not?"

"I am sorry to say I know nothing about it," said John, affecting to examine a picture in the volume he had lifted up, making a feint to read now and then, but in reality watching Angy. "I might have learned, I suppose, but the fact is, there are so many poor devils of musicians, that it seems a pity to interfere with their chances of earning an honest living."

"I don't see what that has to do with a man's cultivation of his tastes," said Seymour.

"O, when I want music I pay for it," said Ivington, settling himself back in his chair.

"What a vulgar dog!" thought Seymour to himself, and his cheek grew hot. But he was too thoroughly a gentleman to take offence at the implied superiority.

"That's a fine group of Wessing's," he said, a moment after, as Ivington continued indolently to turn the pages.

"I think I must get that," John replied.

"Wessing made me a present of this yesterday," continued Seymour, turning to Angy. "He had but two, and it will be months before any others are out."

"Then you know Wessing?" asked John Ivington.

"He married my sister," was the reply; "and I am happy to say his genius brings him in a great deal of money," he added, quietly.

"What a glorious thing it is to possess genius!" cried Angy, with a burst of young-lady enthusiasm.

"Do you really think so?" queried Seymour Hurst.

"Indeed I do. I would give all the world if I were a genius."

"Or the wife of one," laughed John, concealing his burning jealousy.

"No, I didn't say that," protested Angy; but that moment her eyes met the luminous orbs of Seymour Hurst fastened upon her. A burning blush suffused her cheeks, at the same time a new and beautiful expression gave new animation to her countenance.

"She loves him—she loves him!" repeated John Ivington to himself, savagely; "but—it was *her* face, and no other, that I saw at Breslau. She shall be mine!"

Just then they were invited into a pleasant little dining-room, and sat down to a table charmingly arranged.

The oysters were excellent, and received their due meed of praise. After supper Seymour started for home; John Ivington walked with him to the road.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

It was a warm night, and the rich man did not care to enter his palace. Of late he had not rested well. In spite of his will, he invariably awakened at midnight, and the voice he had seen in his dream seemed to follow him.

"I tell you, man, I will haunt you to death." He never slept without a light in his room, and if by any chance it went out, he lay trembling there like a guilty coward, till sometimes it would have been a positive relief if he could have seen some solemn shape gliding across the room. But though he saw it not, all the logic he could bring to bear failed to convince him at times that the spirit was not there.

It was said in former times when a family moved in, some member or members of it were carried out dead before six months

had elapsed. Now John had sworn to himself that he would prove the fallacy of this superstition, by bringing a bride over the threshold before the expiration of that time; and he was bound to fulfil his oath, because of the face the witch had shown him in that old foreign town.

To-night he did not care to go in, for he was by no means happy. The bright eyes, and face so full of power, of Seymour Hurst had made him very uneasy.

"Pshaw!" he soliloquized, "it will be years before he is able to take care of a wife. In the meantime there is a chance for me; and I'll improve it. I don't know why I should be jealous of this fellow, but his manner hurt me confoundedly. How bright the moon is!" he continued, looking cautiously over his shoulder, and up and down the road. "And there's the whistle. Nobody'll stop here to-night, of course!"

The trees threw fantastic shadows, which he tried to avoid—he always avoided shadows and darkness, if it was possible. A secret subtle influence seemed to him ever lurking in both, and his conscience made him cowardly. Not that he often thought of the ragged child whose tears and prayers had left him hard as adamant. It was not the living he feared, it was the dead. That awful dream had seemed so real to him.

Suddenly he drew back. A figure exactly like that of Seymour Hurst came rapidly across the road, the head bent low, and almost buried in his breast. He had a carpet-bag in his hand, took long strides, and looked neither to the right nor left as he passed John Ivington, of course, without seeing him.

"That's very strange," said the latter, half aloud. "Can it be that fellow back again, in the dead of the night, making straight for Eden Lodge, too? What does it mean? An elopement, or anything of that sort, I wonder? I must see to this." And he hurried after him. Yes, the man went in, without shutting the gate after him, and seemed to find no difficulty in entering the house. He had a nightkey, then.

Carefully John Ivington stepped upon the porch, and stood behind one of the slender pillars, where he could be quite hidden, if he chose, by the vines that grew around it.

For a brief time there was utter silence. Then he heard some one call out again and

again. There was a stir above; the room was lighted, so that the beams fell far out upon the garden-paling. Then there were steps down stairs, and a great cry—a woman's cry. The shutters only were closed, so that John Ivington could not help hearing distinctly.

"Hal! what is the matter? Are you sick? You're white as a ghost! Mother, make haste, it is Harry."

"Come in here, Angy. Are there any folks visiting here?" asked the man.

"No—but what is it, Hal? You have some terrible, terrible tidings—I read it in your face."

"Nothing, only—for Heaven's sake, do not look at me so!—only—without help, I am a ruined man—that's all."

He spoke with an effort, and panting like a wild animal run down by its pursuers.

There was no answer for a moment, then with something like a moan, Angy called her mother to come quick. The widow was very much alarmed, and ran hurriedly at this last call.

"Harry—my son! what is it that agitates you so?" cried the mother, almost in tears.

"I am ruined, mother! I have lost myself eternally—I have ruined your good name with my own."

There was a terrible silence.

"I have forged a paper to the amount of twelve thousand dollars. The man who lured me to this villany, and whom I trusted, has escaped, and in forty-eight hours it will be known—and—*they*—will be after me. O cursed fool that I was!"

"Hal, this is awful!" exclaimed the widow, in an altered voice; "this is awful! We couldn't raise five thousand on the house, mortgaged as it is." O, it must be some hideous dream; I am not awake—great Heaven! my boy that I brought up with such care."

"I know it, mother, I know it," groaned the miserable culprit. "I don't expect any pity or sympathy from you, Angy, or anybody. I'm a miserable devil. If I could only get off—great Heaven! it is my first sin, will nobody help me?"

"Who can? Who will? Who could we expect to help us?" cried the mother, bitterly.

"Surely who? then ruin must come, but I swear I'll kill myself rather than meet it."

This was followed by a stifled scream from mother and sister.

"O what shall we do?" moaned Angy. "Who would help us? Mother"—there was another short silence—"Mr. Ivington?"

John Ivington's heart throbbed wildly. He saw his way out of the mist he had been creating for himself.

"He is only a friend, Angy. How could we tell him the miserable truth, even if—"

"I would ask him!" cried the wretched man, "even on my knees, if only to save you from humiliation—but would he pity me? would he listen to me? These rich men have no pity for the poor and miserable. Shall I go to him to-night—go to the man I have never seen but once? What shall I plead to him for—in whose name? My God! I shall go mad!"

John Ivington's brain was not idle as he stood there—always ready to start back into deeper shadow.

"How could you—how could you, Harry?" wailed his mother.

"Don't ask me that; I've nearly gone crazy asking myself such questions. The devil tempted me, I suppose; I thought the way was clear to make a fortune. I allowed myself to hope that I could give you and the girls a princely home—my head has been full of such schemes for the past two years, and here is the end of it all—a jail in prospect."

"You say it will be known—"

"In forty-eight hours. If to-morrow I should find some one to help me out! But the thought is folly—who would pay twelve thousand dollars for me?"

"I would, willingly, if it beggared me," sobbed his mother, "for the sake of your father's honored name."

"Don't—don't!" cried the young man, in anguish.

"Harry, we must think it over," said Angy; "go to bed now, and we will contrive some plan. I will ask Mr. Ivington myself; he can but refuse me; and then, if disgrace comes, we will bear it. Come—come up stairs now."

"O Angy! I can't rest—I shall die! If I had only foreseen the consequence. Fool, miserable fool!"

John Ivington stepped softly from the portico; the moon was in shadow now, presently it came out, disclosing his face, on which sat a smile of triumph, as he said exultingly to himself:

"I'll make that old witch's prediction in Breslau come true."

## SAVED AT A SACRIFICE.

HE slept only by snatches that night. The shadow seemed closer than ever. He trembled partly with exultation, partly with fear. He was very near the goal that had seemed so far away a few short hours before; he held the price of a man's life in his hand—the anguish of a woman's heart. His conscience never troubled him, only through personal cowardice. Not to be found out, was his aim—the grovelling instinct of an animal's nature. As for pure and holy love, he did not know what it meant, this handsome, this fashionable, this rich man, who had schemed and plotted so often under those silken canopies.

"A fair chance before me now, and I'm a fool if I lose it," he muttered to himself, shifting his head on his uneasy pillow. "Twelve thousand! what's twelve thousand to me? But I must have my price—bargain for bargain."

He looked from the window—for he had only to touch a silken tassel, and the light blinds slipped asunder. All the beauty of yesterday seemed blotted out. He had come home in fair moonlight; a dreary misty rain obscured the landscape. The trees blinked through the thick folds of a curtain of fog; the window-panes streamed with fine, almost impalpable channels, the sky was heavy with clouds.

"Just the day!" he thought, exultingly, "just the day to catch my bird; and having once caught it, transfer to its cage will take place in a remarkably short time. The less thought, the less regrets that slip between now and then, the better for both. I think I'll devise an errand that will take me to the Lodge early. They will never suspect."

Angy had not slept at all; her mother's grief was continuous, though not violent. The weary sobbing sigh, the half-whispered prayer, were often heard by the poor girl, who had wept herself almost ill. Towards morning her mother fell asleep. Angy arose quietly, and, an unuttered fear at her heart, crept softly into the room where her brother had retired. It was his room, and bore unmistakable masculine evidence of the fact. Guns, pistol-cases, fishing-rods, a pair of antlers he had bought of an old farmer when a boy, a few sporting pictures, a camp-bed, and a

great display of trunks and boxes met the eye in every direction.

Pale and heavy-lidded, Harry looked first so corpse-like that his sister darted toward the bed, suppressing a scream with difficulty. He slept, however, the silent sleep of exhaustion. But for the line of anguish that darkened his brow, his face wore a childlike innocence of repose, and Angy, who had transferred the almost idolatrous love she had felt for her father to this only brother, wrung her hands in mute sorrow, as she thought of the revelation of the last few hours.

"Poor boy! he was tempted," was her low tremulous exclamation. "He never would have done it, but for some bad influence, never. God help him! God help us all!"

She went down stairs. Betty, the simple old woman who was their right hand in household matters, was just stirring, and Angy wandered disconsolately from room to room. How changed the day! how changed the circumstances! their very lives seemed to have gone forward at one bound into some gray and desolate valley. The light seemed to have faded from her eyes, and the gloss from her tresses, and yet her sorrow became her. The flowers so tastefully arranged by Seymour Hurst, lay huddled together; had some malign influence wilted them?

"Lord bless us!" cried old Betty, as she looked into the parlor. "Why, you're down early, child, though to be sure this dark weather makes it seem earlier. I saw Mr. Ivington coming over with something swinging in his hands, and was going to the door—why! Lord bless us!" For Angy had started and turned so deadly white that even Betty's blurred old eyes detected something wrong.

"O; there he is now!" cried the girl, in a voice of anguish, as the bell rung. "O Betty! what shall I do?"

Betty stood still, staring and bewildered.

"Don't let him ring again, Betty—O!—stop! let me think one moment. What shall I do? If I could only be firm! only keep calm! Betty, just say to Mr. Ivington—that—I would like to see him a few minutes in—the library—Betty. Perhaps my father's spirit may be there," she moaned, "to help me plead for my poor erring brother. But how can I meet him? How can I tell him of this—this terrible

disgrace? I must—it is better for me than poor mother—Harry was her idol—God forgive him. O, he is coming! and what shall I do with these tears?"

Yes, he was there, even at the door. Perhaps nothing could have pleaded for the poor girl so eloquently as her attitude at that moment; her head, her whole form drooping in the sorrowful grace of sincere grief, her pretty face half turned away; a crimson spot on either cheek contrasting with the dead white pallor, her white hands resting on the dark marble of the table before her.

"Miss Angy—I fear—you are certainly ill—or—something has befallen you."

She dared not look up, she could not, if the effort had been to save her life, at that moment. John Ivington watched the curve of the beautiful throat, the outlines of the symmetrical figure, and the face whose counterpart he had seen at Breslau.

"Mr. Ivington—we are in trouble," said Angy, falteringly; "we—that is, I—" and here her voice failed again, her lips quivered.

"Do not doubt that I will aid you, Miss Collins, to the full extent of my power; trust in me."

"O you are good! you are generous! but you do not know—"

Did he not know? The fiend saw the sarcastic smile which he hid from mortal eyes. It was of the spirit, and devilish.

"You will not thank me for drawing on your sympathy—for detaining you so long," said Angy, now lifting her slight figure, and trying to face him, steadily, but yet failing. "I might as well come to the point at once, though it covers me with shame. Mr. Ivington, will you please close the door?" (he turned to obey her) "my brother has been lured by wicked companions, to do a terrible thing. You will hardly credit me when I say he has forged a paper to the amount of twelve thousand dollars, and—we—are too poor—to—help him."

Her face was now one crimson from lip to brow; the red tide crept over her throat, and even the hands, that were suddenly lifted to the shame-painted face, were covered with the same sanguine tinge.

"Is that all, Miss Angy?"

O Heaven! could he speak in that light way—did it mean? She let her hands fall, and lifted her eyes to his face, distressfully.

He came forward, almost smiling.

"Miss Angy," he said, again, "is that all? Be sure I have the will to aid you, if you will give me the power."

"I—give you the power?" she murmured.

"Even you. Can you guess what I came for last night? and what I felt when I saw you so—shall I say, *pleasantly* occupied? I will say now what I could not then, for lack of opportunity. I love you, Angy Collins. Be my wife, and thus give me the power to help your brother out of this, or any other difficulty."

This was so sudden a revelation, that it struck through and through the sensitive heart, on which it fell, knell-like.

"But Angy, you *must* be my wife."

The subtle decision expressed in the repetition, revolted her. For a moment she felt like collecting all the forces of her nature for a vigorous resistance, but she remembered her broken-hearted mother up stairs; the guilty, but still beloved brother. There came upon her with terrible distinctness the words he had said, that he would not live to bear the disgrace, or the punishment. She knew he would not, and could she live to feel, that but for her he might have reformed, and been respected, instead of filling—horrible thought! a suicide's grave? It seemed as if all feeling was struck dead in her heart; even the love she felt for Seymour Hurst, who had been her playmate when a child, and her companion until her father's death.

Did hours pass, while she stood there, feeling so cold, stern and dumb? She never knew; but what time passed took from her all the dew and freshness of her youth. She grew old in the presence of the man whose longing for her was so arbitrary.

"No other condition—none?" she murmured. "This is so unexpected."

And he answered:

"No other."

"Then—" she held out her hand, mute-ly. Her face grew white, the color forsook her lips.

"You accept?" he cried, eagerly, his eyes lighted with a too-selfish joy.

"Yes—I accept."

He heeded not that the words were cold and mechanical; that the hand was like ice in his own; that the chaste forehead was like marble to the touch of his warm lips. She was his, this beautiful girl that he had coveted. If he had known what

torments of feeling surged in that apparently pulseless bosom, feelings she could scarcely understand, and could not control at all—would he have been less happy? Your selfish natures never blush at a possibility of wrong-doing; they are always right, and obtuse almost to sublimity.

"Get me your brother's paper, Miss Angy, let me dispense with that formal prefix; I will set things right before the sun goes down. You are agitated now, wait a while. Remember, there is no danger, the secret shall be kept safe in my bosom; no one will ever dream that the honor of your name was ever suspected. I will call again in an hour, return to the city with your brother, take up the note, and then you will all breathe freer. No wonder you were pale and frightened, my poor darling. Say to your mother that my man killed the game I brought over, early this morning—it is a present for her. You are not so sad now?"

The girl shook her head.

## CHAPTER XL

### BURNED IN THE FIRE.

"WHAT's the matter, I wonder?" soliloquized old Betty; "the girl looks for all the world like one in a dream. 'Twould be funny, though;" and the woman chuckled, for she had always predicted that the rich young landholder would come after Angy for his wife, and had built much upon the magnificence of the prospect in view.

"Angy?" called her mother from the top of the staircase. The girl flew towards her. "Did you look in—did you see? I thought I heard him stirring—and O, I feel so fearful! All his things are there, you know."

By "his things," Angy divined what her mother meant.

She knocked softly at the door, did not wait, but opened it, disclosing the young man in the act of hastily thrusting a weapon back into its box.

"O Harry!" she cried, reproachfully.

He smiled, a haggard smile it was.

"Don't be frightened, Angy; I shall not do any violence until it comes to the worst—then God help us all."

"But it won't come to the worst, Harry—I have found you a friend."

"What?" He sprang forward, an electrical change in his whole being; so sudden,

that it thrilled her, and at that moment her sacrifice seemed slight in comparison with his great relief.

"Yes, Mr. Ivington; he was over here early this morning. He will attend to it."

"And I will pay him back every cent! I swear I will pay him back every cent!" cried the young man, falling on one knee beside his sister, hiding his face in her dress, and sobbing like a child.

Mrs. Collins came up with an anxious face.

"It is all right, mother; Mr. Ivington says there shall be no trouble." Her voice faltered a little.

"O my darling! what great good news! Where is he? on my knees I will bless him for this noble friendship—but—you—you are pale—you don't look happy, my child."

"It—has all been very unhappy, you know," quivered Angy, who longed to be alone by herself, and ease an almost breaking heart by tears.

"Not this, surely; O my darling! I could not feel happier in heaven, it seems to me, this minute. And you, Harry—can I trust you again?"

The young man had risen to his feet, and stood regarding his sister, with an anxious side look.

"I was wondering whether I should accept this good fortune," he replied, in a dreary voice. "I read something in this child's face that troubles me. She has obtained this money at some heavy cost."

Angy turned towards him, laid her cold trembling hands on his arm, as she said, quietly:

"You have nothing to do, Harry, with my private affairs, and no reason in the world to think about me at all, now. As for this agitation, which you think you observe, attribute it to the frightful strain upon my nerves. I have not slept all night. I think, indeed, while you are gone to the city with Mr. Ivington," how the word faltered on her dry lips, "I will try and get some sleep."

So they said nothing more, but allowed her to go to her room, where she threw herself on the bed, to weep the bitterest tears her eyes had ever known. For an hour she remained thus, nearly convulsed with grief; then she arose, bathed her eyes, and proceeded to take from their different depositories several trifles, among them a picture, which she pressed passionately to her lips.

"It is well my father forbade an engagement," she said bitterly, as she looked for the last time upon the glowing manly beauty of Seymour Hurst, then placed the little picture in the box from which she had taken it. "I must return everything. I must write coldly and calmly, that I am going to be married, and we can keep the secret, I hope—the reason why—if Harry will, so can I. He will—see others he can love, and perhaps, after all, he didn't care so very much for me."

The day passed by, slowly, drearily. At night came a note, by John Ivington, from Harry. "He was all right, but wouldn't come home just now. They must feel that he had been so near disgracing them, etc., etc. It was better for him to remain away a while. Meantime he would work hard to repair his error; they should never blush for him again, never. Mr. Ivington would bring the note with him, which Angy would please destroy when he gave it to her. Never, never could he be sufficiently thankful—he hoped Angy might appreciate the noble qualities of that good, *good* man, who had told him all, and he wished her every joy. How could she help but be happy with him? But he intended to labor very hard, to economize and retrench, till he had paid that blessed friend, who had come to them in need—yes, to the uttermost farthing."

That same night came, not a letter from Hurst, but the man himself, in a whirlwind of grief, desire, disappointment. Then succeeded a stormy interview, where the discarded lover had it all his own way, and poor Angy was almost passively silent, while her heart was breaking.

It was well that John Ivington left the cottage as he came, or heaven knows what Seymour might have done in the first fury of his jealous passion. He accused her of flirtation, selling herself for money, being fooled with gilded toys, bought with a price, and still she kept silence, enduring all. When he appealed to her mother, there was a look of anguish on that mild old face, that startled him, and silenced his reproaches. Evidently there was something wrong, but what it was, was beyond him to divine. If he had known how bitterly the poor girl despised herself, and yet deprecated the impossibility of feeling or doing otherwise, he had been amply revenged.

"I am proud, Miss Collins," at length he

said, "and I shall beg for no favors, I assure you." He took his hat to go.

"These are yours," said poor Angy, faintly.

The day had been damp, and in such weather the widow always had a fire in one old-fashioned fireplace; a little flame was burning there yet, between two angry red sticks that had just broken apart.

"Ah! these are mine! and what are these?" was his reply. He broke open one package.

"Letters—umph! the fire needs more fuel," he added with a low harsh laugh, and in went the letters.

"This—O! a picture! I'll keep that, some one else may learn to prize it. No, on a second thought, that's better with the rest," and over went the delicately painted miniature, frame and all.

Angy sprang forward with a half-smothered shriek. It seemed as if he might feel the anguish that was almost killing her; then seeing that rescue was useless, and might not be interpreted rightly, she sank back in her seat again.

"These are all trifles, of no earthly use to any person now," and deliberately, one by one, with compressed lips and shining eyes, he threw everything in the fire, said good-night with a brief cold nod, and was gone, leaving the poor girl half fainting.

It was well for her that company came in, making it incumbent on her to sit and entertain them as best she could. They were two or three merry pretty young girls, and all their conversation was concerning Willoway. It was plain to be seen, that to either of them the prospect of becoming mistress of the place would have been like gaining possession of paradise; and when, after one of them, with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, ran out to ask Betty for a drink, there was a coolness and a silence, which seemed very awkward, following so much chat and girlish confidence. Angy did not understand it.

But old Betty had spared her all explanations, by saying:

"You see everything seems to go so sideways, and will, I s'pose, till Miss Angy is married."

This was all right, for the girls had long ago given her to Seymour Hurst.

"Will she go to the city to live?"

"To the city!" cried old Betty, lifting her thin eyebrows, "why, where should she



go but to Willoway? To be sure they'll have a house in town, I suppose, during the winter, most very rich folks do."

"In town! Willoway! why what on earth do you mean?" queried the young lady, aghast.

"It's an awful secret," said the artful old Betty, "and not to be told to no living creature, on no account whatever; but Miss Angy has caught the owner of Willoway, or rather, the owner of Willoway has caught her, and I shouldn't wonder if they were married right off."

"Seems to me it *has* been kept an awful secret," said the young lady, quite chagrined, and turning to go. "I thought if ever she married, it would be Seymour Hurst. He's more of a man, in my estimation, than a dozen Mr. Ivingtons. But there, some girls are born to just such luck," she mused, as she moved through the hall on her way back. "How in the world *did* she manœuvre—and she'll be mistress of Willoway!"

Splendid presents soon began to come in. Angy had tried to conquer herself, but in the effort she had grown pale, almost haggard. John Ivington, who prided himself upon knowing human nature, had wisely

timed his visits; they had not been too frequent, or too long. He knew he had secured his wife; that was all he cared for at present, save that the marriage must take place soon, and must be a ceremony of unusual splendor.

The night preceding that of the wedding, the dream, or vision, came to him again. The aspect of the old man was more threatening than before, his warning more awful, John Ivington woke up with the cold sweat beading his brow—a deadlier cold at his heart.

"I wish dreams might go to the deuce!" he cried, emphatically. "Curse the old man! and as for the child, she lies buried fathoms deep. No use in trying to frighten me, though after all it's my own silliness, confound it! thinking about it all the time. Hang care! I'll drown it for one day; to-night sees Angy my own. If I knew where to send it, I'd buy a handsome present for that old witch at Breslau."

And everybody said that night how white and stately the young bride looked; so unlike the blooming, light-hearted Angy.

And Seymour Hurst sat in the solitude of his study, as cold and marble-like as she.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## "HERM" TRUSSELL'S LUCK.

BY G. W. MARSTON.

TRUSSELL'S luck had turned! The dogged perseverance of the man had its reward at last! Many a month he had toiled at his task, with no evidence of success, and no jealous interference from outside parties desirous of jumping his claim. In the busy neighborhood hundreds of impatient miners had gone from claim to claim, working fruitlessly near the surface, and abandoning each place to betake themselves to a more promising field. So it became a standing joke about the Rient Camp that Trussell was digging his own grave by way of pastime, and the warm-hearted though bluff miners came to regard him as a fixture, and characteristically gave him a "front name" without the asking.

A jolly new comer, after conversing with Trussell, had declared him a stray hermit, which so tickled the fancy of the crowd he asked to take "suthin," by way of introduction, that "Herm" Trussell became his cognomen forthwith. That he was a "quare" genius, all allowed. His luck seemed to be of the most unfavorable variety. Did he dam the waters a few rods above, a rain would wash it away during the night, and destroy the labor of a week; did he refuse to quit and share a new claim with a fellow-worker, the latter would make a "strike." His luck ran all one way; his pick broke, but a considerate friend whom he had aided before the diggings became his resort, loaned him an old one, and considered it as altogether departed from him. As to coin, Herm Trussell was as destitute of it as of diamonds. It seemed sufficient that he should have his rations, which consisted principally of tobacco, regularly.

Herm had come to camp one day, striding over the mountains with a blunderbuss, a knife and a horse-pistol. Uncouth in appearance, and angular in cranium, he had impressed the few who first saw him with a profound respect. The man's muscle stood out on his fore-arm like a corded whip, and no one seemed to care to come in contact with his sledgelike fist, even in this region of constant quarrel. He had shown his pluck, too, elsewhere. Len Harding had seen him in the act of resisting a "committee of safety," who were about trying a supposed horse-thief, and were disposed to hang the suspected wretch without proof. Trussell had interfered and secured an hour's delay, and during the hour the real thief was captured, and shortly after adorned the most available tree in the neighborhood. This was at Santie's, over the river, and a hundred miles away.

Trussell had friends at the start, and commenced working on shares with a party of three. The company finally leased the claim to Trussell for two years, in settlement, as they were completely "broke," and without the wherewithal to liquidate the little bill he presented for payment. That it was a good trade for them, every one alleged, but no one cared to express a favorable opinion as to its bearing in the case of the lessee. He must develop the claim alone, that was evident. He could pay in promises, but the veriest laborer preferred the touch of the coin to the palm, by all odds. So Herm dug alone, dwelt alone, and by the abandonment of the claims nearest his, became in a measure isolated from the rough comrades who passed him twice a day, and found him ever at work.

Trussell's luck had indeed changed. One day he had rebuilt his dam for the fiftieth time, and, with a greater confidence than ever before, retired to rest after a hard day's work, lasting from sunrise to sunset. Sound sleep prevented his hearing the muttering thunder and the increased roaring of the waters tumbling down the mountain. Finally the water trickled by his shanty, stealthily but surely creeping nearer its entrance as its pathway widened in its downward rush. Our hero only became aware of the proximity of danger when his blanket became a conductor of moisture, and then he leaped to his feet at once, wide awake, and ready for any emergency. The hut had but one entrance, and that faced the boiling torrent rushing resistlessly past. Retreat by that route was cut off. The rear of the building rested on a huge boulder, which seemed immovable when Trussell erected his domicile. Being higher than in front, the water had not reached it. The deposit of the sweepings of former freshets had lain at the base of the rocks for years, and Trussell began to dig energetically in the soft deposit, which presented an easier way of exit than any other place could offer. The dirt flew right and left, and the imprisoned man grew more desperate; but at last passed outside through the narrow exit he had made under the edge of the rock. In a few minutes the ground trembled as if from an earthquake shock. The Velta dam, a mile up the gulch, had given way, and the lesser dams must follow. The assembled miners waited for no further omens, and soon were out of harm's way, losing sight of the foaming torrent that rushed madly on, sweeping their camp of all its traps.

Daylight revealed the extent of the disaster. The rain had ceased, and the vast extent of the water-course was plainly marked with drift. The power of the mighty waters had revolutionized nature! The camp was no longer a camp, and but little vestige was left to indicate that it ever had been one. The dead body of a stranger was found entangled in the branches of a tree bordering on the extreme edge of the ravine. No one could recognize it, for the clothes were torn completely away, and the body was bruised cruelly by contact with the rough rocks lining the descent of a half a mile. The unknown was kindly buried by the pioneers, who grimly gazed on death and thought of a future not far away with indifference.

No one noticed the absence of Trussell, he had mingled so little in the "society" that the camp afforded. In fact, every one was interested particularly in that most attractive of all enumerations, number one. It had been known that Trussell was safe during the night he spent with the motley arrayed miners after his escape from drowning. Had it been otherwise, to search for him would have been useless in the wild waste of waters. Jagged rocks presented their fronts where the day before wild flowers were rooted in the friendly soil. Trunks of trees, monarchs of the forests, lay strewn high above the subsiding waters. Huge boulders had come tearing down the gulch, impelled by a force that was resistless. The debris from the big dam at Velta, stoutly and compactly as the frame had been built, was torn and twisted from fastenings that the hand of man could not have destroyed in many weeks.

In a settlement the affair would have been looked upon as a severe disaster, but the miners of Rient had experienced worse catastrophes, had risked their lives in more desperate encounters. The freshet was a thing of the past. Their thoughts were of the future. The danger just encountered was of the expected ills which they had the sense to observe must occur. So the camp became a camp again. Many of the old landmarks were gone, but enough were left to guide the various claimants in staking out their claims with sufficient accuracy to prevent quarrels of any serious character.

Trussell was perhaps an exception to the rule, for a rule without an exception would be marvellous. Trussell's luck had not quite deserted him. He had gone to his claim at dawn to see the extent of the damage, but that which had been, was not! The freshet had jumped it! The fact was at once patent. The jutting point of land on which he had wasted so many weary days had disappeared, could not be found. It had been washed away! Trussell was a "cleaned out" man. The foundation of his hopes had been dashed away by the raging waters, and every chunk of gold imagined in concealment in the depths of his claim, every unturned stone he had left there the night before, every grain of dirt, shovelled and unshovelled, was scattered miles below Camp Rient, perchance to become constituent parts of other claims, but never to be Trussell's. The blow was a heavy one, for this

man had come to the diggings with an object in view. No one had ever suspected the secret his lips never betrayed. He was thought to be a contented being, ever ready to lend a hand in need, but lacking the vim necessary to success. A plodder accomplishes; Trussell's faith had borne him on, when faith was lacking in his whilom neighbors. Repeated failures only made him the more persistent, and developed an indomitable will, that had no other occasion to show itself. Of such trials comes success.

Trussell leaned his head on his hand and thought of his loss. He remembered the day when he set out so earnestly and boldly from the little Ohio village where he had been born, and the direct cause of his departure. There was a picture in his mind's eye of the dark-eyed lassie, woman grown, who had wept at his departure and encouraged his drooping spirits at the outset. The future was to be theirs—this man's and this woman's. It had a dark cloud in the perspective, but hope was the silver lining. Through the dreary months of labor the thought of his future reward had cheered and sustained him; while diligently working his mind had been busy with the past.

The brother of the woman he loved was a gay-hearted boy, who had not yet attained his majority. Fond of sport, his very virtues had brought trouble to the family. A comrade with whom he was intimate had committed a crime which involved Melvin Howard, because of evidence wholly circumstantial. Though the boy was innocent, the law held him, and his mother mortgaged the farm for the defence which brought her son from prison, and ultimately secured his acquittal.

But the strain made upon the widow's mind was too great, and her son, on being released, found but a wreck, where he expected the warm sympathy of a mother and strengthening counsel. Mark Trussell had been one of Mary Howard's most devoted admirers, but had not dared to hope for a response to his love, until the misfortune came that brought them nearer and revealed to each the state of the other's heart. Then Trussell had dedicated his life to her and hers, and putting aside the pleasure of the present, had decided that in the new country on the Pacific slope a fortune might be more readily attained, for time would not wait, that he might redeem the estate, and time was very necessary in the slow going

town in which he was located. This had sent Trussell on his errand abroad, with the one idea that for the sake of his loved ones at home the possession of gold must be the absorbing topic. At first his feverish anxiety led him, like a majority of his brother miners, to go from claim to claim for a lucky strike. This proved a partial success, for a small nugget was the result of a single day's labor. This he had disposed of and sent the proceeds directly home. Meeting with no further success in that manner, he had deliberately resolved on working the next claim that should offer until fully convinced that further labor would be useless. And this was the result of months of toil! He recalled the thousand and one hopes entertained, the many glimpses of happiness fate had in store for him. But one letter had he received since his arrival in the diggings, and that was months before. It told him of the failing strength of the Widow Howard, and his heart warmed as the daughter's devotion to her mother impressed itself on his mind. How eager he had been to appear before them with his horn of plenty! With a moan of despair, Trussell regained his feet, and with a disconsolate air passed toward the spot where his life had been endangered the night before.

An involuntary cry arose from the miner's lips as he reached the site of his departed hut, and frantically endeavored to wrench something from beneath the boulder which had served him as a partial foundation for it. If the freshet had done wonders elsewhere, here it had performed a miracle. A mass of debris, with a heavy tree-trunk for a battering-ram, had impetuously dashed against the boulder, which, having been relieved in some degree by the removal of the earth near its base by Trussell in his endeavor to escape from the hut, had toppled over until it found its centre of gravity on a firm strata of rocks. Into the vacant space from which it fell the waters had surged and swept until the soil had been washed completely away, leaving exposed the prize for which he had struggled; wealth untold. There lay the precious metal whose possession was not only happiness but life, a rich vein of gold, such as his eyes had not seen. To work it was his first thought, and ere the miners a half a mile away had staked out their new claims, Trussell had collected samples sufficient to convince them of the value of the new Trussell claim.

A few weeks of diligence, and then he dis-

posed of the claim for a fortune, and was never seen again at Rient Camp.

Trussell's trip to the States was made overland, as he preferred this route, besieged as it was by dangers, to the more tedious sea trip. The stage in which he took passage had a cavalry escort. Of the passengers one was a Mexican, with all the peculiarities of his race. Low-browed, dark-skinned, and unkempt in dress, his company was more necessitous than agreeable. On arriving at one of the frontier settlements this fellow left the party, purchased a mustang, and was off on the plains and soon out of sight. Trussell had in his haste no time to visit Sacramento and exchange his gold for a draft on Cincinnati. The bulk of his money was tightly strapped about his waist, and he had more than once caught the malicious eye of the Mexican fixed upon him. The departure of the suspicious "greaser" brought a feeling of relief. The passengers generally had shared the feeling of insecurity while the Mexican was with them, not fearing any open deviltry from him, however.

At Cheyenne, Trussell decided to leave the party, and with a St. Louis merchant, Delton by name, essay the remainder of the passage on horseback, the St. Louisian being familiar with the route, over which he had ridden sufficiently to know its every turn. The morning broke clear and mild, and Trussell's heart warmed within him as the genial rays of the sun developed the beauties of the route. The scenery was sublime, and the travellers were in the best of moods. Towards night they came across a log cabin, whose light seemed like an *igni fatuus* as the daylight departed. Delton cautioned his companion; during the day he had related some of his experiences on the trail in earlier years, when this locality had been considered dangerous. Hobbling their horses at a safe distance from the cabin, having previously made a wide circuit around it, they retraced their steps and approached the rear of the building, rapidly and stealthily. The voice of a man, talking in a conversational tone, first attracted their attention, but the words were inaudible. They were about to move forward and apply for a night's rest, when a familiar voice arrested their movements. The possessor of that voice could be but one personage, and that the half-despised, half-feared Mexican, Vasquez, who had left the party full five days before our two travellers left Cheyenne. Vasquez

seemed irritated, for some unknown reason, and would occasionally raise his voice as if in a passion. Snatches of the conversation reached the ears of Trussell, half in Spanish and half in the broad language of the border, easily understood by either of the listeners, who gradually drew nearer, and were soon enabled to see through a chink in a corner of the cabin, a man of large stature, half lying half sitting, and with the eye of a practised huntsman watching the catlike step of the Mexican as the latter strode across the room, ever and anon uttering fierce ejaculations of rage.

"The cowardly caballeros should have been on their track ere this, two days, and we know not yet their trail." To which the stranger responded:

"H'yar's me, and nyther hide nor ha'r do I find. 'Twere a desput chance I tuk with a gov'ment bounty offered for my head; I'm well out of the scrape as 'tis."

A surly answer came from the impatient Mexican, and then he flung himself on the ground and lapsed into silence, which was soon broken by the entrance of a third party, a half-breed, who had evidently been on a mission. His approach had been unobserved by Trussell and Delton, who were intent on ascertaining the true state of affairs ere they returned to their homeward march. The entrance of the savage was the signal for the occupants of the cabin to seize their arms, but the ejaculation which escaped the lips of Vasquez proclaimed him a fiend.

In the broken language of the border, half Indian and half Spanish, the new-comer appeared to narrate his adventures, scowling darkly as he strode to and fro, Vasquez being such an impatient listener that he had ceased his walk and stood motionless. The listeners at the chink gathered from the conversation that others of a scouting party were scouring the plains in search of—who? Vasquez furnished the answer. Trussell and Delton were the sought-for victims, and as they listened to the foiled plans for their capture, their escape seemed providential. But they were not wholly safe, and their immediate departure was necessary. Stealing softly and silently from the cabin, they were soon mounted and increased their pace as they got safely out of hearing of their deadly enemies. A friendly moon guided their steps, and before dawn they had put a good thirty miles between them and the cabin, had tethered their fagged animals, and glad-

ly sought repose. The few hours they had taken for sleep brought refreshment to men and beasts, and ere noon they had doubled the distance between them and the place where they had learned of their danger.

Towards night a distant range of hills came in view, and the thirsty animals whinnied at the coming relief, for the route traversed since resuming their march had been desolate and waterless. At the verge of the hills a pure stream of the much desired ale of nature's own brewing leaped along the descent, issuing from the base of a cliff, and forming a rivulet of no small dimensions, from which the animals partook freely and the travellers sparingly. No camping site seemed near, and they remounted, spurring the horses through the water and towards the declivity. Nearing the opening from whence the water leaped, Trussell was astonished to find that the entrance seemed to be smaller than beyond, and being in advance, and the water hardly up to the knees of his horse, he unhesitatingly ventured upon its passage, and found himself suddenly within what appeared a vast cave.

Delton, in the rear, had turned to look at the setting sun, and descried miles away in its immediate track the figures of horses and men, five in number, following on the trail over which they had so recently passed! An involuntary ejaculation brought Trussell to the entrance of the cave again, where Delton pointed out the strange figures, which looked gigantic in size as the sun sank below the horizon.

Were they friends or enemies? The warning the night previous was sufficient to cause the deepest apprehensions of danger. Could this be Vasquez and his ruffians? The twilight afforded but little aid in exploring the strange quarters they had so fortunately stumbled on, and in the gathering obscurity it was useless to investigate fully until sufficient light could be procured.

Gathering the dried leaves outside the entrance and abundance of firewood from the shrubbery about, a fire was soon struck by means of flint and steel, and knowing that a half hour must elapse before the coming party should arrive, they entered the interior of the cave and found it angular and huge in extent. Its surface was broken by innumerable crevices which led into other and still larger apartments. So far had they proceeded that the stamp of the animals was not heard, though echoed and reechoed in the

outside apartment. This, then, prevented their betrayal.

The animals were brought to one of the inner apartments, tethered and left for the night, and Trussell and Delton partook of a frugal meal from their pack. An hour after they were outside listening to the approach of the party seen on their trail. As they withdrew hastily within, the coming beasts stampeded and were soon quenching their thirst in the flowing stream. Riders, too, came tumbling to the ground, and drank their fill as if they had been on a long march. Then remounting, they crossed the stream and ere our startled fugitives were aware, were boldly heading for the entrance! A retreat behind a friendly rock, near which lay the entrance to an adjoining apartment, became necessary, and they breathed not a word as the party approached the smouldering embers of the fire, which gave an uncertain light and welcomed the new-comers with its latent warmth.

Fresh brush was heaped upon the fire, and as the blaze lighted up the gloomy apartment, our heroes could see from their hiding-place the stalwart forms of four desperate men, and one of them was quickly recognized as the individual who had been seen and overheard in Vasquez's cabin, discussing the whereabouts of Delton and Trussell. Every word of the conversation, which now commenced as the heat of the fire warmed the bechilled villains, was easily heard by their proposed victims.

A fifth figure approached the fire, and again they recognized the ill-natured visage of Vasquez! The air of disappointment was no longer visible, and a gleam of triumph showed that he was confident of success. Could he know that within the sound of his voice the crouched forms of the men he sought lay close against the friendly rock? No! The few words he vouchsafed to utter convinced them that although he was on their trail he yet was unaware of their close proximity. But discovery was imminent. Should the villains venture to leave the fire and enter further into the cave, nothing could prevent it.

After the lapse of a half hour, spent in eating the venison the trail hunters had not neglected to provide themselves with, in partaking of sundry potatoes of vile drink, and indulging their smoking propensities, Vasquez and one of the half-breeds ventured to enter one of the adjoining apartments,

but were prevented by the sudden action of one of the remaining smokers, who leaped to his feet and scattered the fire in every direction by a well-directed kick. A half-muttered curse escaped the lips of Vasquez, but his quick ear detected the tread of horses, and he quickly passed to the entrance of the cave.

The sound of voices without reached the ears of Trussell. All was still within the cave. Seconds, minutes of suspense ensued, and then stifled cries were heard. An evident struggle was in progress. Not knowing the cause, interference was useless, though Trussell and his companion were well-armed and prepared to sell their lives dearly if necessary. With a whoop, the half-breeds returned through the entrance, the fire was rekindled, and the bodies of two men, dressed in the United States' service uniform, were perceived. They were evidently senseless, but soon returned to consciousness, one only being seriously injured, having a gaping knife wound in the side. To all queries as to their reasons for frequenting the spot, the prisoners replied that they were in search of water. They were sent out as scouts for that purpose. All attempts to glean satisfactory answers to the oft-repeated questions as to the number and probable whereabouts of their comrades failed, and their brutal captors bound and gagged them for the night, removing them to the further part of the apartment for greater security.

Escape to them seemed impossible. The reflection of the light of the fire on their faces was plainly seen by the concealed men, who were in a crevice nearly directly opposite. Trussell at once conceived a plan to release them, and as the half-breeds grew boisterous, found occasion to communicate it to Delton. The effect of the whiskey on the half-breeds was soon evident. One by one went off into a doze, and all were soon in the depths of heavy slumber. Not so, however, with Vasquez, who appeared watchful and impatient, employing the passing hours by abusing the prisoners, after having stanching the wound of the weaker one. Occasionally he would go to the entrance and listen, as if expecting a comrade. Finally, as the hour of midnight passed, he stretched himself on the floor of the cavern near the fire with a half-uttered curse, and soon joined in the chorus of the snorers who had preceded him.

A half hour afterwards Trussell and Del-

ton crept out into the flickering light, cautiously following the trend of the cave as they neared the bound captives, who were soon aware of their presence. To remove the cords that bound them and the gags from their mouths was hardly an instant's work, and with the assurance of friendship they were assisted to the inner apartment. A groan from the wounded man as he crossed the threshold awoke Vasquez, who saw but a portion of a soldier's uniform disappearing in the darkness, and bounded in pursuit with a malediction. A pair of stout arms pinioned him, and a pistol was at his forehead ere he had traversed the apartment adjoining the one in which his fellow-ruffians had been sleeping. To bind and gag him was but the work of a half minute, and Trussell returned to reconnoitre.

The boon companion of Vasquez had been partially aroused by his cry, and was moving uneasily. Trussell waited for him to become quiet, but the fellow was beginning to awake. The muskets of the soldiers were in sight from the aperture, and to obtain them it was necessary to venture in plain view. The thought was father to the action, for Trussell had sped across to the further side, near the outlet, had seized the arms and was retiring. A dozen yards still lay between him and safety, when the awakened villain jumped to his feet, and Trussell saw the gleam of a pistol barrel. The fellow had drawn a head on him!

As if to take a more deliberate aim, he had paused ere firing, and that pause was to cost him his life! Delton had followed Trussell in season to see him grasp the arms. He saw, also, the danger of his fellow-traveller. A flash as of lightning illumined the aperture, a report as of a thousand pistols echoed and re-echoed throughout the cave, and the would-be murderer reeled and fell as his pistol was discharged and the bullet entered the ground. Trussell was safe, and the muskets, which were still loaded, were added to the strength of the party. There were three good men and a wounded one against the remaining trio of villains.

The shot had awakened the latter, and they were instantly alert. To retreat from their unknown enemies was natural, but no protection offered but the cave entrance, wherein they quickly stowed themselves. The fire had nearly died out, and in the gathering darkness the available soldier peered out, while Delton stealthily took aim

along the surface of the ground, awaiting any favorable opportunity for a shot. A bullet from the entrance grazed the soldier's ear, and Delton fired at the flash! An Indian yell showed that the shot had executed its mission. Reloading, the three fired in succession, and the half-breeds burst from their lair into the open air just as streaks of early dawn indicated coming daylight. Our heroes in the cave were scarcely aware of this sudden conclusion to the fight, when they were startled by a crash outside, delivered only as regular soldiers can fire. The soldier sprang to the entrance at the sound, recognized the cheer following the discharge, and responded by a "three times three," in which Delton and Trussell joined. Then a score of "blue-coats" entered the cave, fresh fuel was heaped on the fire, questions were asked and answered, the wounded man was brought to the fire and his wounds dressed, and finally the abashed Vasquez was brought out, frightened beyond control. Of his former companions not one was left alive, and his life was forfeited! Prayers and entreaties were vain. He had attacked United States troops. He was court-martialled, condemned to die, taken out in the light of the sun and shot. An hour after the soldiers and the men they had helped save were on the march homeward.

In a week the party were within the confines of civilization. The detachment of soldiers received their discharge papers at Fort Scott, and their commander was ordered again to the frontier. At St. Louis Trussell parted with his companion, and was soon en route for Ohio and home. As the distance between him and all he held dear in this world lessened, fears for the first time entered his mind for the safety and welfare of the loved ones, and as he alighted at the M——depot they had increased to anxiety. Through the darkness he rapidly neared the familiar spot, from whence a gleam of light guided him as of old, when excuses appeared

necessary to gain admittance to the dwelling which was Mary Howard's home. In the darkness Trussell found himself essaying to catch a glimpse of the woman he loved; then there was a furious knock at the door, a rustling of coming footsteps, and Mary fell helpless in his arms. The day she had hoped and prayed for had come. The reception of the only good news from him which came months before, the long silence following, in which hope and fear struggled for the ascendancy, had unnerved her.

A delightful surprise awaited Trussell also. Mrs. Howard appeared as if from out the darkness of the life in which he had left her. Her son's character had been upheld, his reputation was cleared of all reproach by the confession of the guilty youth who had hoped to shield himself by inculpating young Howard. The tottering reason of the mother needed this one act of justice to sustain it, and that brought her back to love and life.

In a quiet nook, surrounded by arches of huge trees, with beautiful walks, and a garden that any daughter of Eve might find satisfactory, Trussell made his future home. The building needed repairs, and a few weeks' preparation sufficed to put the estate in good order, and allowed Mary Howard ample time to prepare for wedding ceremonies. As a dream the affair passed off, gay guests came, listened, saw, congratulated, were entertained, and wished Mr. and Mrs. Trussell the best of wishes. Among them all no truer friend was found than Mr. Delton, who came from St. Louis, and was almost as much an object of interest as the bride and bridegroom. Trussell's luck has not changed for the worse again, although nearly two years have elapsed since he made the strike that turned despair to joy. The little prattler who tumbles about the floor of the home in which Mr. and Mrs. Trussell and Grandma Howard are established has Delton for his "front" name.





## HILARY'S PONY.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

WHEN Mr. Thomas Mason failed, and had to sell everything, and go away from his home, he felt very bad; but what made him feel worst was selling Hilary's pony. Mr. Mason never was married, and Hilary was his nephew; and the uncle thought as much of him as if the boy had been his own son.

"But I can't even keep your pony, my boy," he said. "For, after all, I bought it, and only called it yours; and everything I have belongs to my creditors."

Hilary was a little Texas boy whose father and mother were in South America. Hilary went there with them a while, but the hot climate made him sick, so they sent him North to his uncle. They were not very rich, but they were in hopes to be rich enough soon to come home and live. Mr. Mason had a good income where he was in Rio Janeiro, and didn't like to leave it just then. Besides, they had three children with them, younger than Hilary, and it wasn't so easy to move in a hurry.

When Mr. Mason failed and lost all his money, he did not lose all his friends. One of them offered him a very good situation as agent to travel in Europe, and he could do no better than accept. So he placed Hilary at a boarding-school for boys, and went off on his travels.

Then commenced poor Hilary's troubles. There was no one present to protect him, and he was ill-treated. He hadn't enough to eat, and he was scolded and shut up in his room when he didn't have his lessons well enough, and the money his father sent him to spend he never got.

He almost cried his eyes out with homesickness and hunger, and then he ran away. It was bad enough, but it could have been worse; and maybe he was happier wandering barefoot over the country, doing errands for people here and there, than he would have been at the school of Mr. Piper. You see, he crept down stairs, when he ran away, with his shoes in his hand, meaning to put them on when he reached the road; but fancying

that he heard some one in pursuit, he ran, and lost his shoes on the way. That's the way he came to be barefoot.

But after a time the wandering got to be very tiresome, and once more Hilary grew



homesick, and cried for his poor uncle who had indulged him so, and wished his father and mother would come home or send for him to come to them. The boy never recollected that if they should come he would know nothing about it, as he never looked at the papers, and got no letters, and, of course, they wouldn't know where to look for him.

He had been wandering about a month or more, when one day he came to a town that was only a few miles from the one his uncle and he had lived in, only Hilary didn't know that. He had never seen the place. He looked about him a little, then went to the door of a livery-stable and asked if they wanted a boy to do errands.

The man looked him over, and hesitated. Hilary didn't appear very nice, certainly. His hair was rough, he was barefooted and had his trowsers rolled up to the knees, and he had a frowsy black dog following him. But his eyes were bright and his face pretty, and the man concluded to try him.

"Are you afraid of horses?" asked the man.

Hilary was feeling rather bad just then, but he couldn't help laughing. The idea that he

who could ride on horseback before he could speak, who was called a *real Texan ranger*, being afraid of horses!

"I'm afraid of homely ones," he said, "but I can manage a beauty."

"Can you lead a pony round to a house in the next street?" the man asked. "A lady there wants him to ride."

At the word pony, Hilary looked sober, because it reminded him of his dear lost Gipsy, whom he had not seen for three months. But he said "Yes," he could lead him, and then the man gave the directions.

The pony was then led out to the stable door.

"There he is!" said the man.

Hilary turned, and what did he see but his own beloved Gipsy!

"O Gyp! Gyp!" he cried out, and ran and threw his arms around the pony's neck. It would be hard to say which was the gladder; for Gyp neighed and danced, and put his nose to Hilary's face. But poor Hilary only hugged the pony and cried.

The men looked on. "It must be that runaway boy," one of them said. "And we can get the reward. This was his pony."

You see, these men read the papers if Hilary didn't, and they knew all about him, and that he had run away from school just before his father and mother came home, and that they had advertised him in every paper in the country, and offered a thousand dollars reward for him.

"What shall we do about it?" one of the men asked.

"Say nothing now," the other replied. "I will send him with the horse, and follow out of sight, and see how they meet."

Hilary wiped his eyes presently, and taking Gyp's bridle, led him sorrowfully down the road. He had learned by this time that he was not allowed to ride horses that had been saddled for ladies or gentlemen. Gyp walked sorrowfully also, wondering probably why his old friend did not ride, and why he was bare-footed, and why he cried. And the black frowny dog walked sorrowfully after them. Altogether, they were rather a sober-looking procession. The stable-man laughed at them as he followed out of sight.

Presently they came to the house where the pony was wanted, a pretty rustic house where they kept two or three summer boarders. As they turned in at the gate, they met a man going out.

"This is the lady's pony," Hilary said, as he had been bid.

So Hilary went to the door and sat down there, and the black dog sat solemnly down by him, and the pony put his face close to the boy's, and seemed to be thinking that he didn't know what he should do, but that he had a great mind to get Hilary on to his back, and run away somewhere with him.

After a while a little impudent-looking spaniel came out of the house, and began to bark at the black dog and to snap at the pony. But they never minded him. They had too much to think of. In a few minutes they heard a sound of voices, one a lady's, the other's servants, and they seemed to be coming down stairs.

"No," the lady said, "I do not want any company. I am too much used to riding to be at all afraid. Besides, company would make me nervous, and I am almost wild now. I can't keep still a minute."

At this the lady came out on the step, and taking the riding-skirt from the saddle, put it on. Hilary looked up at her, and saw a tall slender lady, whose eyes were red as if she had been weeping, but not just then. She looked as if she had cried weeks and weeks. But in spite of this she was very pretty, and to the boy she looked remarkably sweet. He kept looking at her, and as he looked he felt so homesick that the tears burst out again, and he took one hand away from the bridle, and hid his face with it.

It was at this moment that the lady saw him.

"What is the matter, little boy?" she asked, quickly. Then when he didn't answer, she came and put one of her hands on his head and the other on his arm. And he could feel that both her hands trembled very much. "Speak!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "Tell me who you are, and what you are crying for. Let me see your face!"

Hilary lifted his face at that, and the lady looked wildly at him an instant. Then she screamed out, and clasped him in her arms.

"My own little boy! It is Hilary!" she cried, kissing him over and over.

Then Hilary recognized his mother, and knew why she had looked so sweet to him, and he put his arms round her neck, and cried as though his heart would break. But this time he cried with joy.

The lady didn't go to ride that day. She didn't feel too nervous to keep still any more, and she couldn't leave her son one minute.

"Don't send Gyp away!" begged Hilary.

"You shall have him, my dear!" his

mother said. "Your father will buy him for you."

Then she took him into the house and gave him a nice lunch, and new clothes, and made him tell his story over; and it seemed she never could kiss and look at him enough.

That night the father came, and there was

great rejoicing. They told him that they had been nearly crazy about him, but they wouldn't scold him. For he had suffered enough already.

And Mr. Mason bought Gipsev of the stable-man, and when they had their own home he was Hilary's pony again.



## HIS MOTHER'S WORK.

BY CARRIE D. BEEBE.

## I

BYHALIA is a town containing a few thousand inhabitants, slowly struggling up to a city charter. There is considerable wealth in the place, and, of course, an upper circle in society. This circle is composed of two classes: persons of wealth, and persons of distinction. Poets are allowed in it, for there are poets in Byhalia. Professor Zeman, who is a wonderful pianist, and who composes the "sweetest" waltzes, naming them for the belles of the place, is also allowed a foothold within the charmed ring. A few persons may chance to enter it hanging upon the skirts of their rich relations; but this number is comparatively small.

Along and beyond the borders of the town are a class of people, who, though living in comfort and moderate wealth, are only tolerated by about half the members of this select society, before mentioned. They are the farmers who pay their taxes honestly; while many of the town, of greater wealth, manage by a series of twistings and turnings which would do credit to a first-class circus-performer, manage to evade or deceive the assessor, and so throw the onerous burden principally upon the rural districts.

About two miles from Byhalia resided Mr. Percy. He was a man of about seventy years, with a wife much younger, but in rather delicate health. He had a son and daughter, the children of his old age. Once a poor boy, he had earned, by diligence and perseverance, a very neat fortune, before his children's birth.

Ned, the son, is twenty-five. Agnes, his daughter, twenty. Both are intelligent-look-

ing, and favorites with their friends. They are, perhaps, more cheerfully invited into the upper circle of the Byhalia society than any others of their class.

Mr. Percy belonged to the old school, and always dressed plainly. He lived well, and his house was neatly and comfortably furnished, nothing more. A fine piano had been bought for Agnes, and she had added a few pictures and ornaments to the parlor. The house was large, notably hospitable, and a very pleasant place.

A mile distant from Mr. Percy's, and nearer to the town, lived the family of Mr. Cooper. They were in very moderate circumstances, starving themselves, as some of the neighbors averred, that they might dress well. Mr. Cooper was a farmer, and a man who never left his place except upon business; hard-working, penurious and plain. Mrs. Cooper was a blonde, young-looking, and she considered herself a beauty. She was very weak, however, in everything but will.

She had three children, two sons and a daughter. To have these children move in the best circles of Byhalia was her constant struggle and aim. She affected, when conversing with her neighbors, a familiarity with the notables of the place; called Professor Zeman "Carl," and spoke of the wife of Judge Benton as "Elizabeth."

Fortune seemed to favor her at last. One of her younger sisters married Mrs. Benton's brother, and though he was both lame and old, Mrs. Cooper never ceased to enlarge upon the fine match. To her sorrow, however, they soon removed to a distant part of the State; so she was obliged to look about

for other skirts upon which she might cling. Another blow came unexpectedly. Her eldest son, whom she had sent to Byhalia as a merchant's clerk, married, without his mother's knowledge and consent, a young lady who was not only very poor, but who also possessed half a score of brothers and sisters. Her father, to Mrs. Cooper's extreme disgust, was a common laborer.

This was fearful. It was of no use to tell Mrs. Cooper that the young lady was pretty, capable, and had improved her opportunities wonderfully. If James must needs marry a pauper, why couldn't he have gone away from home to commit the atrocity? But here in Byhalia, where Mrs. Benton could see Mary's father going and coming from work every day in his laboring clothes, it was terrible! James was forbidden the house, and his mother raved continually. She was afraid the trouble would kill her, she told everybody, for she was very weak; and for once she told the truth.

At last she heard that a friend for whom Mary had been named had given her a number of well-timed and useful presents in the housekeeping line. James's employer liberally increased his salary; and as Mrs. Cooper found they were bound to live respectably, she signified her benign willingness to forgive them, provided they would never do so again.

Lillia, Mrs. Cooper's daughter, was twenty-five. Something must be done; it would never do to allow her to become an old maid. Everybody said she was a good girl, and added in the same breath, "very unlike her mother." But the marriageable men of Byhalia did not fall in love with her. At last she received an offer from a gentleman living in a distant town. He was of a good family, Mrs. Cooper approved the match, and they were married.

Now all her hopes were centered in Thornton, her youngest son. He must make a brilliant match. He had promised her when James was married he would never wed without her consent. He must go to Byhalia and commence business. But what? They had so little capital to give him.

The academy at Byhalia had formerly been an excellent school. The present lessee and teacher was very incompetent, the school went down. Thornton had received a good English education. He suggested to his mother that he should start a private school.

"The very thing, my dear son!" she cried.

"But how shall I obtain the funds neces-

sary to rent a suitable building?" he asked. "Trust me for that, Thornton!" exclaimed his mother, in a theatrical manner. "You shall have the money if I am obliged to sell all the old family jewelry and heirlooms for the purpose!"

I have neglected to state that Mrs. Cooper was very fond of mentioning her "family." Her father was a plain man; and her mother, report said, drank privately, from a teapot, the same beverage with which Sairey Gamp was wont to refresh herself, when "so disposed." But this may have been a vile slander; for the lady in question was never seen in the afternoon, as she was always asleep. And, if she was addicted to nervous headache each morning, it only went to prove that her health was very delicate, as her daughter said.

Mrs. Cooper rushed up to her room to bring out the family "jewels," and to take an account of stock in general. The jewels were soon produced; but, as they consisted of a wornout hair bracelet, a pair of thin, old-fashioned hoop earrings, and an ancient brooch with a huge yellow stone called by courtesy a "diamond," they were regretfully put aside as unavailable.

But energy will surmount difficulties, and in some way the money was obtained. The building was rented, the school commenced. It proved successful, too. Thornton Cooper became a man of enterprise in Byhalia, and O, joy of joys! was occasionally invited within the charmed ring.

He had known the Percys intimately from childhood, and had loved Agnes for years. He met her oftener now, and paid her marked attention. He was rather fine-looking, resembling his mother closely. Agnes loved him, but she stood a trifle in awe of Mrs. Cooper.

Thornton called upon Agnes; it was New Year's eve. When he left they were betrothed. Agnes was very happy, and seemed to grow really beautiful, with a flush on her cheek, and a new light in her eye.

"Let us keep the engagement secret for a short time," Thornton said, when he gave her the betrothal ring. "I am too poor to marry just yet, dear; I must work a while first, a year, perhaps. But if I succeed according to my expectations, let us be married on next New Year's eve."

"I am afraid your mother will not like me," Agnes said.

"She cannot help it!" Thornton replied,

with emphasis. "You need never fear that, little girl."

Agnes consented; and the days passed, the golden, golden days. Thornton's vacation came. He had been very successful; the next year promised even better. They must be married, as he had said, and would inform their friends at once. He should himself speak to Mr. Percy soon, just as soon as he returned home from the visit he intended to make, from policy, during vacation.

Agnes told her mother of the engagement, who, in turn, communicated the news to her husband. Mrs. Percy informed Ned, and then the matter dropped.

Thornton returned and reopened his school. One evening in early autumn Agnes received a letter from him. He often sent her little love-notes when he could not come. She went up to her room to read it alone, bidding her parents good-night, though it was still early.

Some hours afterward Ned, returning from a watch by the bedside of a sick neighbor, saw a light in Agnes's room. It struck him as very unusual, at that hour.

He paused in the sitting-room to warm himself a moment before retiring, as the night was chill. His mother slept in the next room, and as the door was open, she spoke to him.

"Mr. Lane is better," Ned said, in answer. "But is anything the matter with sister? I saw her light burning when I came in."

"I don't know," in sudden alarm. "She received a letter from Thornton, to-night. I think I'll go up to her room."

"You will take cold, mother, let me go. Perhaps Agnes has only fallen asleep in her chair."

But no, Mrs. Percy would rise and put on her wrapper. Ned warmed her slippers by the fire. She went quickly up stairs. Agnes opened the door at her mother's call. Her face was scarlet and swollen with weeping, her hands trembling, her eyes wild.

With the greatest difficulty Mrs. Percy learned the cause. Thornton had written briefly, breaking the engagement.

"I cannot tell you why," he wrote. "I love you still. But if we meet hereafter it must be as friends or strangers, whichever you decide."

Next day Agnes wrote, releasing him. But to her mother she was greatly changed. She seemed very listless and weary; moving as in a dream. She never sang now, and scarcely smiled.

Christmas week a note came from Thornton. Could he call upon her New Year's eve as a friend? She gave consent, hoping he would explain himself, and he came. Then she learned why he had cast her off in such an ungentlemanly manner.

"My parents do not like you," he said, "and when James married I promised mother I would not wed against her will."

Agnes smiled then, and quietly returned his letters and his ring.

"You did quite right," she answered, quietly, but in a tone which, obtuse as seemed his idea of right and wrong, made him feel himself a villain. "Very right. My only wonder is that you should feel at liberty to make an engagement without first consulting her, under the circumstances. However, let it pass. I can never cease to feel grateful to you, for releasing me." And she bowed him out.

He did not call again. Not so Mrs. Cooper. She did not care to make an enemy of the girl who was good enough, only not quite what she expected in Thornton's wife. So she put on her hat and shawl, and rode over to Mrs. Percy's.

Agnes had just come in from a ride, and her cheeks were glowing, her eyes sparkling from exercise.

"Mrs. Percy," began Mrs. Cooper, effusively, "I can never see you and Agnes in such sweet companionship without envying you her tender care. I am so *wretchedly* lonely since Lillia went away."

Agnes looked a little bored. When their visitor left Mrs. Percy said:

"Agnes, you must tell me why Thornton broke the engagement; you surely know now."

"It was *his mother's work!*" Agnes answered bitterly. "Don't think, mother, I am so weak as to care for him still. I despise him utterly, for the cowardly manner in which he made and broke the engagement. But the thought that any man would dare trifle with my love in this way humiliates me past endurance."

"The old hypocrite!" exclaimed Mrs. Percy, apostrophizing Mrs. Cooper—not Thornton. "To think she would *dare* insult me by coming to my house after all this!"

Mrs. Percy lost no time in communicating the news to her husband.

"The wretch!" said Mr. Percy. "Agnes is well rid of him. Only for the publicity it would give the affair, I'd beat him within an inch of his life!"

Instead, however, he was unusually tender and kind to Agnes. He showered presents upon her, and tried in every way to bring her out of the dreary apathy into which she had fallen. When summer came, he sent her away with Ned on a pleasant round of travel; and when they returned in autumn, Agnes's wounded pride seemed healed in a great degree, and her spirits almost restored to their old cheerful tone.

## II.

AGAIN it was New Year's eve. Ned and Agnes were invited to a party given at the house of Judge Benton. Of course the *elite* of Byhalia would be there; among them Thane Livingston, who had been absent from home on a three-years' cruise round the world, and his sister Eloise, the belle of Byhalia.

Agnes had spent, on the whole, a pleasant autumn. Two different suitors had sought her hand, but her heart was not touched, so they were quietly dismissed.

"What dress will you wear to-night, dear?" queried her mother, as Agnes was about to leave the room to prepare for the party.

"Thornton Cooper and his mother are to be there," interrupted Ned, suddenly, before Agnes could reply.

"I don't see how that will affect the dress question," returned his sister, rather sharply.

"Of course it will not affect it in the least, sis," Ned answered, in a conciliatory tone. "I only thought about it at the moment, and so mentioned it."

Agnes turned to show Ned the rather sickly smile she called to her face.

"I shall wear my crimson silk," she said to her mother.

She went up to her room, and put aside the purple poplin which lay upon the bed.

"The crimson will be more becoming," she said, "and I must look well to-night."

It was very becoming, and so every one thought when she made her appearance in Mrs. Benton's parlors. The rich crimson silk swept the floor, and it was toned down, slightly, by an overdress of soft white lace. She wore brooch and bracelets of garnet, and in her hair a blood-red monthly rose.

Mrs. Cooper was there. Her family was connected with Mrs. Benton's, by marriage, she told every one, as fast as opportunity offered.

"What a beautiful woman Agnes Percy

makes," some one whispered in her ear. "Her girlhood hardly gave promise of anything half so fair."

"Do you think so?" she queried doubtfully.

Thornton evidently thought so, for though he had Eloise Livingston on his arm, his mother saw that his eyes sought out and followed Agnes constantly. His companion also spied her, at last.

"How pretty Agnes Percy looks to-night!" she said. "She is passing this way with her brother. I want to speak to her. Thane! don't you remember Miss Percy?"

Mr. Livingston came forward.

"Miss Percy?" he queried. "O yes, but she is much improved."

"There is always such a ladylike repose about her manner," Miss Livingston continued, graciously.

Agnes looked up to greet them cordially, and to bow coldly to Thornton. She would not cut him dead to show her pique, but she always appeared indifferent in his presence. There was just a shade of polite surprise in her eyes when he addressed her in a familiar way. He did not essay a second sentence, but soon moved away, leaving her with Thane and Eloise.

The hostess proposed a dance. The parlors were cleared, and Professor Zeman obligingly consented to play a few waltzes and cotillions. A quadrille commenced forming, Thane Livingston offered Agnes his arm, and they took their places upon the floor.

Mr. Livingston chatted agreeably, and until the dance was about to begin Agnes did not observe that the pair opposite were Ned and Eloise. She glanced over to the wall, and saw that Thornton Cooper and his mother were standing side by side. She looked no more, but turned to answer a laughing remark of her companion's. She knew she was a graceful dancer, and as Mr. Livingston was also, she enjoyed the dance exceedingly.

When supper was announced Mr. Livingston again offered her his arm; Ned followed, with Eloise. Thornton, who had evidently expected to escort the belle, dutifully went down with his mother.

"Do you receive calls to-morrow?" asked Mr. Livingston, as he placed Agnes in her brother's sleigh and was about to bid her good-night.

"Yes," she answered. "Do not fail to come."

"Thank you. I will not forget."

They rode away. Next morning Agnes went singing about the house, to her father's delight. Her preparations for the day were soon completed, and she put on her purple poplin to be ready to receive her guests. It was very becoming, with its soft lace collar and white tie, for Agnes was rather pale to-day. Her hands and wrists showed slender and white from out the laced undersleeves, her figure, willowy and graceful, supported the rich train well.

Her callers from the country came early. They were mostly young men, for the older ones were slower to fall into the custom of calling upon other ladies, leaving their wives to entertain gentlemen in turn. Towards evening her guests from the town called. The last one was leaving when Thane Livingston's sleigh stopped at the door.

"Pardon me, Miss Agnes," he said, "if I have made your call my very last. And, as you seem quite alone, perhaps it is your last also."

He was tired, and it was pleasant to sit quietly with this pale fair girl, the red western clouds throwing a glow in the windows, and the firelight brightening the room. It rested him, somehow, and was more grateful to him than he was willing to confess.

At last Agnes rose, and ordering lights invited him to partake of refreshments which still bountifully loaded the table in the back parlor.

"I have tasted nothing since noon," he said, in reply. "It is the only way to do when one has many calls to make."

"Then sit down informally," she said, "and take a regular supper."

He did not seem averse to do her bidding, and taking a seat, he addressed himself to the edibles with a relish.

"Now," he smiled, as he rose from the table, "please give me a song before I go."

So she sat down to the piano and sang, while he wondered what there was in her song which touched him so; and afterwards thought there must be a spell on the room which made him dread to leave it. Then he went, with the impression that Agnes was not only beautiful and accomplished, but a true and tender woman.

Agnes received no more callers that night. She sat until late, musing by the fire, wondering if this love-dream which she was dreaming would prove as illusive as the last.

Thane Livingston rode home thoughtfully and slowly, but his heart was not as deeply

touched as hers. He had seen beautiful women before, far more beautiful than Agnes, and had been pleased with them, too. Perhaps the feeling would wear away, as the others had done.

The Livingstons were considered the most select of the elite of Byhalia for two reasons: they came of a proud old family, and they were wealthy enough to live upon their income. So Thane, who had never been quick to fall in love, was in no haste to offer his hand to any girl, however winsome she might be.

He often rode out to Mr. Percy's during the spring and summer following, usually accompanied by his sister; and Eloise and Agnes seemed to grow more intimate than ever as the summer advanced.

"Agnes," said Eloise, one day, "I have observed that you treat Thornton Cooper very coldly. I know, too, that your conduct gives him pain. He used to be very attentive to you. I wish you would tell me if you know anything against his character as a gentleman?"

"Is Thornton Cooper anything to you, Eloise?" Agnes asked.

"No," she answered, hesitatingly. "I will tell you the truth," she added. "He seems pleased with me, and has asked me in every thing but words to be his wife. I like him, but whether enough to marry him I hardly know. Please tell me why you and he be came so suddenly estranged."

"I will tell you if you wish it," Agnes replied. She slowly narrated the story of her engagement and its humiliating termination. "It has cost me much to tell you this," she said, at the close. "You would never have heard it, if you had not asked me. Still, you are my friend, and it is your right to know."

"I thank you sincerely," said Eloise. "He is in every way worthy of his mother; I hardly know which is the most to be despised."

On the next day towards evening, Agnes went out to ride. It was during harvest-time, and the men were all busy. Ned was out in the field, and his father absent from home. So she saddled her own little pony Puss, put on her habit, and set out.

She had just disappeared from sight when Thane Livingston drove over the hill from the other direction and stopped at her father's house. Learning that she had just set out for a ride and would not be home in less than two hours, he decided to go and meet her. He had scarcely reached the carriage,



when Puss dashed up to the gate riderless, with the saddle dangling loosely under her breast.

For a moment he seemed to have lost possession of his senses, then he dashed into the house to ask for the second time what direction Agnes had taken.

"She went down the street," said Mrs. Percy, wondering what had happened to excite Mr. Livingston so.

"Her horse has come back without her," he said, in explanation. "Don't be frightened, Mrs. Percy," for she had grown pale in turn, "I'll go in search of her at once."

He sprang into his carriage and dashed down the street. Suddenly turning round a curve he saw Agnes sitting quietly by the roadside. Reining his horse, in a moment he was by her side.

"O Agnes!" he cried; "are you hurt?"

"No," she answered, with a smile, and wondering if he was pale with fright. "I am not injured in the least. I saddled Puss myself, and did not fasten the girth as tightly as I should have done; for when I rounded the curve the saddle turned, and I fell to the ground. By accident rather than by design I think, I struck upon my feet, and was not at all hurt. Puss, however, was dreadfully frightened, and like a little coward, ran home as fast as she could."

"I am thankful you met with no serious accident," he said, earnestly; and taking her face suddenly between his hands he kissed her.

This was a proceeding entirely unlooked for by Agnes, and it was her turn to grow excited.

"Mr. Livingston!" she exclaimed, and then she stopped abruptly, for he looked as though he could explain the matter satisfactorily.

"Thane," he prompted. "You are to call me that hereafter. Eloise told me less than an hour ago, of Thornton Cooper's baseness. It makes my blood boil whenever I think of it!"

It was not a very coherent explanation, but Agnes seemed to understand it perfectly.

"Because I love you," he said, "and I want you to be my wife."

Agnes promised. He lifted her into the carriage, and they rode swiftly home, to relieve Mrs. Percy's anxiety. Then Agnes learned that Thornton Cooper had called upon Eloise the evening before, and offered her his hand in marriage.

"I am afraid your mother would not like me," Eloise replied. "And I am very sure I shouldn't like either of you."

Thane and Agnes were married on the next New Year's eve;—he would have it so. He purchased a handsome house in town near his father's; and Agnes became a prime favorite in the upper circle of Byhalia society.

Ned and Eloise were married the following summer. This seemed to disgust Mrs. Cooper to such a degree that she gave up society altogether. As for Thornton, he is still unmarried, and, if the truth were told, he will rue to his dying day, "his mother's work."

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## "HOBSON'S CHOICE."

BY RETT WINWOOD.

HOPE slammed the hall-door and stepped into the little parlor where Mrs. Cameron sat stitching some shirts for Major Thornton.

"Mother," said she, desperately, "we may as well put ourselves on short rations at once."

Mrs. Cameron elevated her eyebrows.

"What do you mean?"

"Bessie Briggs has given up her music. I have but one pupil on my list."

"Good gracious! You don't say?"

"We might as well take a dose of hemlock," muttered Hope, giving her hat a spiteful swing across the floor. "Folks did it in old times to get rid of their troubles. You may see how we are to live on the profits of one pupil, but I don't!"

"Mercy on me!" sighed Mrs. Cameron. "After all the money I've spent on your musical education, too. Dear, dear, you're not worth a fig at fine sewing, and there's nothing else to turn one's hand to."

"Humph!"

The girl's tone expressed a deep disdain of her mother's occupation.

Mrs. Cameron recommenced her stitching. There was a long silence, which Hope finally broke.

"Mother," she said, "how much longer can we keep on at this rate, without coming to the poorhouse?"

"Three months, perhaps—not a day over."

"The roof over our heads is mortgaged for all it is worth, I suppose?"

"Every cent."

Hope took time to ponder the matter. "How can we save ourselves?" she asked, presently.

"You must marry," replied Mrs. Cameron, with an askant look at her daughter.

Hope started. "That is easier said than done, mother. The men don't propose, and they might say 'no,' were I to do the asking. Besides, I have only two lovers, David Bodkins and Gregory Dane. It would look like 'Hobson's choice,' in either instance."

"Gregory Dane!" repeated Mrs. Cameron, on a raised key. "Good gracious, child; he's crazy!"

"I know it. But David is a fool," said

Hope, contemptuously. "Between the two, I have a decided preference for the crazy man."

"You are too severe on David, my dear. He is considered one of the most likely fellows in the neighborhood. He's worth money, too, and loves you to distraction."

"Humph! you wouldn't like to have me marry David, mother, and you know it."

"You might better be Mrs. Bodkins and have a big farm of your own, than simple Hope Cameron and go to the poorhouse."

"I would be simple Hope, indeed, were I to go to the 'Poplars' to be ordered about by Sister Bodkins. Even if David were admissible, I never could put up with his mother. Just think of the life I should lead with her to prate 'original sin' every time I went contrary to her wishes. No, mother, marriage seems out of the question, unless we can import some new material to work upon. You must hit upon some other expedient, or the problem of our future will be unsolved."

Mrs. Cameron heaved a sigh, but had no further suggestions to make. Things looked dark, and no mistake. She had been slaving all her life long to make a genteel living, and now that she was a widow of thirty-eight with a marriageable daughter, affairs were in a worse condition than they had ever been before. There seemed no present possibility of relief from the petty shifts and expedients to which she was compelled to resort in order that appearances might be kept up.

At the very moment that she and Hope were considering their worldly prospects, and bemoaning the wretchedness of their lot, David and his mother, "Sister Bodkins" as she was called, were holding a confabulation in the long low kitchen at the "Poplars."

David had just come in from raking hay, and sat in his shirt-sleeves by the window, fanning himself with a wide-brimmed straw hat. A great brawny six-foot-tall fellow, with bare muscular arms, a well-built frame and a complexion "brown as a berry," wisps of hay clinging to his hair and sticking out of two holes in his boots, he was a perfect picture of rugged health and strength, but certainly not the most romantic object on which the eyes could have rested.

Sister Bodkins was washing the supper dishes, trotting backwards and forwards between the sink and the tall wooden dresser in one corner, and learning verses from the book of Job between times. That was her way of doing business, as the saying is. While at work she always kept a Bible lying wide open in some favorable spot that was easy of access. In the present instance, she had purposely placed it in the window-stool beyond David, and invariably leaned over the back of his chair when looking for a fresh verse to commit, intending to attract his attention to the nature of the double duty she was doing thereby. No matter how much dirt had been suffered to accumulate about the premises, for Sister Bodkins did her housework in a very slipshod manner, nor what David's unsatisfied wants might be, whether he slept in a clean or a tumbled bed, or whether he wore purple and fine linen once a month or not—no matter how soiled and frayed her own garments might be, or how sadly down at the heel she was, Sister Bodkins never gave such matters a second thought. "All is vanity," she would say, "and we're apt to make too much of this world's goods. What does it all amount to, any way? Now, there's Mrs. Deacon Gray, who wouldn't be happy in heaven unless she could take a broom and duster along. Land alive, the angels will take care of the cobwebs up there, I reckon! I wouldn't be like Mrs. Deacon Gray, if I could!"

And so, like a great many other women—and men, too, for that matter—while avoiding Scylla, she was wrecked and sadly tossed about in the vortex of Charybdis. She seemed to lose sight of the fact, that dirt and disorder and a selfish disregard for the comfort of others is anything but an indication of saintship. Because she was a good Presbyterian and attended all the circles and societies, besides going to church twice on the Sabbath, she considered that her duty was done and well done.

On the present occasion David saw her trotting backwards and forwards, and knew well enough what she was up to, for the verse-learning was an everyday occurrence; but he was so hard-hearted as to pretend ignorance.

"Job was a wonderfully patient man," she said, presently. "Didn't you ever realize it, David?"

"I've heard you say so, mother," returned David, indifferently.

Sister Bodkins gave the plate she was drying an extra rub.

"I'm afraid you don't think so much of serious things as you ought, my son. It's nater-l for young folks to be careless, but I don't excuse it in you by any means. You ought to have faith, hope and charity, these three, my son."

David dropped his hat right there, and began to dive for it.

"One would be enough, mother," he said, very red in the face. "Give me Hope, and I don't care a rush for the other two."

Sister Bodkins groaned aloud.

"You're a bad boy, David, that you are. You're after Hope Cameron, instead of trying to serve the Lord. O the shameless hussy!"

"Don't you like Hope?"

"You know I don't."

"Why? She's pretty."

"So is dogwood, but that doesn't make me in love with it."

"I intend to marry Hope, if she will have me."

"But she won't."

David pulled a wisp of hay from his hair and began picking it in pieces.

"What's to hinder?"

"Her pride, for one thing. You're a fool for running after that vain creature. Everybody is laughing at you, and she laughs loudest of them all."

"Let them laugh."

"You don't care, but I do. Mrs. Cameron likes to snub me as well as she likes to eat; and you give her chance enough, the Lord knows. It makes my blood boil, that it does."

"In spite of Job's example?"

"Hold your tongue, David. Hope is too vain and frivolous for you. All she cares for is dainty muslins, fine linen and novels. I wouldn't like her to be Mrs. Bodkins the second. She has no more religion than a child; I'm going to speak my mind to her, the first chance."

"Do," said David.

That "chance" was not long in coming. Everybody in Scampertown knew of David's infatuation, and a great many jokes were cracked at his expense. He lived two miles out of the village, but the "Poplars" was quite a noted place, and Sister Bodkins's peculiarities made it none the less so. David was considered "odd" by the young folks of Scampertown, and from the time when he first became smitten with Hope, they had in-

terested themselves in his affairs, and for the sake of teasing our very imperfect heroine, had done everything in their power to help along his wooing. David did not need much assistance, however, for a more persistent lover could not well be imagined. He followed Hope wherever she might go as faithfully as a dog could have followed a master, no matter whether she smiled or frowned.

Not many days after the conversation with his mother which we have partially recorded, both were invited to spend an evening at Major Thornton's—I mean David and Sister Bodkins.

"I suppose we must go," said the latter, ruefully. "I would rather stay at home, though, for I'm almost sure it's a contrived plan to bring you and Hope Cameron together."

"Of course, we must go. Who cares whether it was a contrived plan or not?"

Sister Bodkins's guess was a very shrewd one, for Mrs. Cameron and Hope were included in the invitations. They were a long time in deciding whether to go or stay, and for reasons very similar to those which *did not* influence David.

"It is provoking," said Hope, with tears of vexation in her eyes. "Everybody knows that I hate David Bodkins, and yet they will persist in bringing us together."

"What now?" inquired her mother, who was not as quick-witted as she might have been.

"Don't you see? Major Thornton has invited us on purpose to give David another opportunity to persecute me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. He as good as owned up to the truth last night. I'm tempted never to go nigh his house again."

"Don't say that, dear. We must put up with anything Major Thornton may do. His wife furnishes me with more than half my sewing. It wouldn't be polite to make enemies of them."

"And so I must be a martyr? I'll make him sick of his game, though."

Hope did not fully make up her mind to go until the evening in question; but Mrs. Cameron was so urgent, and furnished so many good reasons, that she could not help but feel the force of them. Not that her mother really wished her to marry David, for she did not; but she had considerable shrewd common sense, and did not think it advisable to sacrifice friends who might be of service to

them for the sake of gratifying any prejudice that Hope might feel. If she did not like David, she could certainly keep him at a distance.

On entering Major Thornton's parlor, Sister Bodkins was the very first person Hope saw, sitting primly in one corner busily plying her knitting-needles, in the unwonted splendor of a new cap (that set awry on her head, of course,) and a black bombazine dress minus half the hooks and eyes, whose places were supplied with pins, and in the side breadth of which was a long rent that had been very imperfectly darned. Before setting out, David had vainly endeavored to persuade his mother not to wear "that darned dress," laying an unnecessary stress upon the adjective nearest the noun; but Sister Bodkins was not so weak as to listen to his persuasions—not she! And so black bombazine it was, in spite of Gog and Magog.

"The old wretch," said Hope, to one of her friends. "Don't you see how savagely she looks at me? Where is her delectable son, I wonder?"

He came across the hall, the next moment, with Major Thornton. For the first time in his life, there was a certain impressive dignity in his bearing, and Hope came very near blushing when he held out one of his horny hands and said:

"How are you enjoying the evening, Miss Cameron?"

"I have but just come," returned Hope, giving her head a toss. "I expect nothing else than to be egregiously bored."

David looked hurt.

"If you cared half so much for my company as I do for yours, you would be sure to pass the time agreeably."

"Perhaps," she said, in a slightly scornful tone, curling her lip.

She turned away, and began talking glibly to Will Thornton, the major's son, thus managing to avoid David for a full half hour, though conscious all the while that he was closely watching her. She shunned that corner of the room in which Sister Bodkins had taken her stand, and was congratulating herself on the ease with which she was getting rid of the two persons she detested so heartily, when lo! the mountain came to Mohammed, that is, Sister Bodkins bore down upon her like a frigate under full canvas.

"Good-evening, Hope," she said, sharply. "One would think I was a dragon, by the way you hide about to get rid of me."

"A mistake of that sort would be very pardonable, madam," said Hope, sententiously.

Sister Bodkins elevated her brows.

"Yes, in a silly chit of a girl who couldn't be expected to know any better."

"Thank you, madam."

"For what?" sharply. "You don't need to be grateful. It's one's duty to speak the truth to people, sometimes. Otherwise, their pride and self-conceit would make them unendurable. But I wish you to understand, Hope Cameron, that you have no need to look down on my son. He is just as good as you are."

"He ought to be very much better."

"Why?"

"Because he has such a mother."

At this Sister Bodkins might have forgotten to imitate Job's example so far as patience under trials is concerned, had not somebody called for Hope to take her place at the piano, just then. Sister Bodkins followed her like a hawk stooping down after a dove.

"What shall I sing?" asked Hope.

Some named one thing and some another. "For my part, I'd like to hear a hymn," said Sister Bodkins. "They are appropriate to every occasion. There is nothing quite so good as a hymn of the right sort. There is one beginning:

"'Come, Thou fount of every blessing.' I wish you'd sing that."

Hope was so ill-bred as to give her head a contemptuous toss, as she said, "I have changed my mind. I shall not sing to-night."

She played the most brilliant polka she could call to mind, and then arose from the piano with flushed cheeks.

"I am ill, and wish to go home," she whispered, hunting up her mother.

"Hush!" returned Mrs. Cameron, making a warning gesture. "Somebody will hear you. You are tired, that is all. I'll not have it said that Sister Bodkins frightened us away."

Shortly afterwards, Hope saw her old enemy at the piano, busily engaged in turning over the sheet music that lay on the rack. Prompted by curiosity, as soon as Sister Bodkins's back was turned, she sought to discover what the malignant old woman had been doing.

The investigation did not need to be very protracted. The music on the rack happened to be Hope's, and bore her name in full. It was mostly operas and dance music. Sister Bodkins had thrust among the loose leaves a tract entitled "Mischief for Idle Hands," and

yet another, called "Satan smothered in Rose-leaves." Not content with these very broad hints, on an extract from the opera of "Martha" she had pricked with her knitting-needles the words "*Touch not the unclean thing.*" A copy of "Norma" bore the significant appeal, "*Sinner, flee from the wrath to come.*"

Hope laughed, in spite of her vexation. David still stood at a little distance, watching every move she made. He now came nearer.

"What has my mother been doing?" he asked.

"If you were to ask her, she would say her Christian duty. Opinions differ, however."

She tried to speak very coldly, but David was not to be put off in this way. He caught her hand in his almost rudely.

"You must try to be charitable, Hope," he said. "I should be glad to have you learn to like my mother. She will always live with me."

"Indeed!" returned Hope, spitefully. "But what is that to me?"

"I intend to make you my wife. I have been in love with you a long time, and was only waiting for a chance to tell you so."

Hope attempted to draw away, feeling very much confused.

"Good gracious!" she cried; "are you crazy, man? I could never think of marrying you!"

David's swart cheeks became a trifle paler than their wont. His bulky frame trembled with suppressed emotion.

"I do not think you have taken time enough to consider the matter duly," he said, in a low deep tone. "I shall not accept any answer you may make as final."

"You have asked me nothing."

"But you know very well what I meant to ask."

"I don't wish to know. You are nothing to me—nothing. I should be glad never to look in your face again."

She spoke in a hot impetuous tone, but a quaver in her voice said that tears were near at hand, ready to flow. David released her, but stood directly in her way.

"Hope," he continued, half angrily, "with all your high notions, you might do worse than to marry me. In one sense, you are no better than I am. We will both have to work, for some years to come, at least. But I could give you a home; you would not need to teach music; your mother should never do another stitch of slop-work."

"Let me pass, Mr. Bodkins. This is a subject I do not wish to continue."

"Will you marry me?"

"No. Stand aside."

He turned away with a long-drawn sigh, and attempted to hold no further converse with her. Hope, freed from his presence, was more like herself, and her spirits arose to their flood-tide.

When she put on her shawl to go away, she found a third tract pinned in one corner of the garment. This happened to be a tirade against dress, and was entitled "Sackcloth and Ashes." Of course, Sister Bodkins had placed it there.

"Poor woman!" thought Hope, compassionately. "Perhaps she takes a real interest in my salvation. It's a pity, though, that her piety couldn't be diverted into a more useful channel."

On the way home she gave her mother a true history of everything that had occurred.

"What shall I do?" She concluded by asking, "How shall I rid myself of that ridiculous fellow?"

"You will have to marry him, Hope," Mrs. Cameron replied, "since he cannot be either snubbed or driven into letting you alone."

"I begin to believe it," said Hope, despairingly.

After that night, she was less at peace than ever. David was like her shadow—a skeleton at every feast. Of all the obstinate lovers she had ever heard of, he was in the superlative. He managed to be invited to all the parties, and at church he sat in a pew overlooking that occupied by her mother and herself. She could hardly step into the street without encountering him. She actually began to question within herself whether she had not unconsciously been guilty of some sin so atrocious in its nature that he was sent to haunt her until an ample atonement had been made.

The summer days waned, while this pertinacious wooing continued. By-and-by good reports began to be whispered of David; he gradually grew into favor among the village people. His manners improved, and he became more particular in regard to dress—copying the garb of the better class of young men in Scampertown. It was whispered among the knowing ones that he was receiving weekly instructions in mathematics and the sciences from Parson Goodrich of the Presbyterian Church, though Hope was not sure whether the rumor was correct or not.

But she was not so blind as to be unable to see that he was developing wonderfully.

"One would think David was on probation," said Mrs. Cameron, when affairs had been in this condition for several weeks.

"How do you account for the change?" asked Hope, in a very absent-minded way.

"He is serving for his Rachel."

"I hope not."

"But he is, though. There has been a decided improvement. He will soon be acknowledged as one of the most likely young men in town. You might better have married him, Hope."

"And had Sister Bodkins thrown into the bargain? That would have been too much of a good thing."

"We are getting poorer every day of our lives. We must be very near the end of the rope by this time. I don't wish to urge anything against your will, my dear, but I do hope you are inclined to take a common-sense view of our condition."

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Not many days subsequent to this conversation, Hope was in the parlor one afternoon practising a new song on the rickety piano that graced the apartment. Mrs. Cameron had gone to the other end of the village to take care of a woman who was sick. Thus it happened that Hope was left quite alone in the house.

Suddenly she heard heavy footsteps crossing the porch. A moment later somebody pushed open the door, when she looked up with a start. Her hands dropped lifelessly away from the keys, her eyes dilated with horror, and the very blood seemed to be curdling in her veins. A single cry fell from her trembling lips, "Gregory Dane!"

Like a flash came the consciousness of the utter hopelessness of her situation. She was alone in the house, and likely so to remain for several hours, and here was this man stealing in upon her with wild wicked eyes glaring at her, and a cunning smile parting his lips—this Gregory Dane who had made love to her more than a score of times in his saner moments on account of some fancied resemblance to the young wife he had lost three years previously. She knew, too, that he had been shut up in a madhouse for more than six months past because he was thought to be hopelessly insane over his loss. It is no wonder that she grew pale as death, and the blood ran icily cold over her lips.

"Yes, Gregory Dane," he repeated, in a

soft winning tone of voice. "Are you glad to see me, my dear?"

He paused between her and the door, not more than three feet away. He looked at her long and searchingly, seeming to take in every item of that inert figure, from the arch of the supple foot to the bands of dark brown hair that encircled her head. His gaze was a singular mixture of love and hate, of tenderness and malice.

"Are you glad to see me, pretty dear?" he asked, for the second time.

Hope's self-possession slowly returned. She had heard it said that there is no way of treating insane people that is half so effectual as to make them believe you consider them of as sound mind as yourself. She looked up at him with a sickly smile.

"Of course I am glad to see you, Gregory," she said. "Why have you staid away so long?"

He leered at her in a horribly cunning manner.

"I knew you would be tired, waiting, pretty dear. But I couldn't come sooner, though I have lain awake night after night, thinking of you. Often and often I seemed to hear your voice in the air, calling to me. I heard it in the winds, and the sunshine, and the rain. Was it really your voice, pretty dear?"

He caught her arm in a vicelike grip, and looked steadily into her eyes. It required a great effort on her part to refrain from shrieking aloud.

"It must have been," she said, humoring his idea.

"I don't believe it!" he cried, fiercely. "It was the howling of the damned. I heard them gnashing their teeth and praying for mercy. The sunshine *lies*, and so does the wind, and the rain. I have been deceived before, just as you are trying to deceive me now. It was *not* you. You hate me, and hoped I would never come back. But I will have my revenge, though. See!"

He drew a large clasp-knife from his bosom, and flashed it menacingly before her eyes.

"See!" he continued, between his teeth. "I came through a field where men were at work, and took this from the pocket of a coat that lay on the grass. I knew you were faithless, and I meant to cut your heart out. You're young and pretty, but you have a very wicked heart; it belongs to somebody else; you will never love me until it is cut

out and buried. Then, then, my darling, there will be nothing to keep us apart."

Hope was trembling like a leaf. O, how she longed to see David Bodkins's stalwart frame coming in at the open door! But there was no probability that anything of the sort would happen. She had foolishly compared David to Gregory Dane, and this was her punishment, perhaps. She had rejected David, and so her other lover had come to make his place good. A just retribution!

She would have called for help, but nobody was likely to hear her. The house stood off from the village street, and several rods from any other. She might be murdered, and nobody know what was being done until it was too late. There seemed but one hope, to parley with the man until some opportunity of escape presented itself.

"I know you will not harm me, Gregory Dane," she said, pleadingly. "How could I love you when I had no heart? You had better leave me as I am, or help me to make myself better."

He peered at her suspiciously from under his bent brows. "You are playing with me!" he exclaimed, suddenly, giving his knife a flourish. "I'll not trust you. You have promised me over and over again before, and then was false as hell. You will be false now, so long as you have that vile bad heart in your bosom. It will be over in a moment, pretty dear, and then you will love me."

His hot breath scorched her cheek. Hope looked beyond him to the open door. Would it be possible to glide past him, and so run for her life? He had trebled her strength, and would be even with her in a moment. That project must be abandoned.

"You dare not do it, Gregory," she said, with well-feigned anger. "I would rise in my grave, to haunt you."

He dropped his head on his hand, a sudden change coming over him. "Grave?" he repeated, in a low sorrowful tone of voice, "I remember; that is where they laid her—a deep, dark, terrible place where the sun never shines, and the flowers never bloom. I've been trying all these weary months to get into it, and cover myself away from the jeering, mocking men who go stalking up and down the earth, but *they* won't let me; you know whom I mean!" transfixing her with his wild burning eyes. "*They* won't let me."

"How cruel!" she whispered.

"No, it isn't!" breaking into a shrill laugh that made her blood run cold. "They are

my friends, and you know it! It is you who are false and treacherous. You have stolen Eloise's bonny hair, and her pretty smile, and her lovely face. But for you she would not have died. You came like a vampire, and she wilted and faded. Did you suppose I was blind to the horrid truth? You exhausted her vitality, breath by breath, and took her identity upon yourself!"

Hope could not repress a shivering cry. He heard it, and his face darkened angrily again.

"I intend to kill you!" he exclaimed, going back to his first idea. "Last night I slept in one of Jupiter's moons. The dog-star came and stood over my head; I heard the music of the spheres, and the Great Bear howled at me over the Little Bear's shoulder. A queer little man came to me presently, who said he was the devil. We talked of you, and of Eloise. He said that I must kill you with the knife I should find in the field. Then my own Eloise would spring up from your dead body."

"But I am your Eloise!" cried Hope, despairingly.

"O no, you are not," with a cunning laugh. "The devil has put me on my guard against your wiles. I'm not to be imposed upon any longer. Do you see that clock?" indicating one that stood on the mantel.

Hope nodded, unable to speak.

"You have three minutes to live. You had better say your prayers."

There was a glitter in his eyes that told Hope she had nothing to expect from his mercy, unless she could succeed in diverting his attention, and so make him forget his murderous design. He stood with uplifted arm, the knife-blade directed towards her heart. He might strike at any moment. It was horrible to face death in that manner. A ray of hope dawned suddenly upon her mind.

"Eloise? Eloise?" she repeated, in a puzzled tone. "Is that the name of the woman you loved? What a wretched mistake you have made. She is my sister—that is why I resemble her so much. She is up stairs, and will be so glad to see you. Shall I call her?"

"My darling, my darling! Is she there? No, no," his face clouding again. "You are lying to me, just as the wind, and the rain, and the sunshine lied. While the Great Bear was howling last night, the devil said you would attempt to palm such a story upon

me. But he told me I must kill you none the less."

"Then I cannot help you to find Eloise," said Hope, desperately. "I have her picture. Will you believe me if I show it to you?"

Hope took a case from the piano behind her. "Here it is. You can open it, and see for yourself."

He took it eagerly, tearing at the clasp with trembling fingers. Hope watched her opportunity, and when he leaned over to look at the pictured face within, which was her own, she gathered her strength for one last effort, and with an appealing look to heaven, gave him a sudden desperate push with her clenched hands, that, finding him at a disadvantage, destroyed his equilibrium, and sent him reeling to the floor.

Hope darted past him, and out of doors, shrieking at the top of her lungs. She heard him gather himself up with a savage howl, but fear lent wings to her feet, and she fled down the path leading to the street, hearing his steps keeping time to her own, and expecting every moment to feel his hands clutching at her throat, for she knew full well that death would be her portion, did he overtake her.

That path seemed interminable. The gate at the end changed while she was still several yards away, and looking up she saw David Bodkins running to meet her. The good angel who presides over the destinies of mankind had sent him that way in the nick of time. He had chanced to pass along the street at the proper moment to hear her screams for help, and had started to her assistance with all a lover's promptness.

Even at such a moment as was that, with a madman's hot breath scorching her neck, Hope had time to think how manly and handsome he looked, and how eagerly he was hastening to her rescue. She did not care if his hands were hard and horny, and his clothes ornamented with wisps of hay, just then. A sense of being protected came over her; she sprang into his arms, crying hysterically, "David, dear, dear David!"

The outburst was involuntary, but it told the patient fellow more than many words could have done.

Gregory Dane came to a sudden pause, eyeing the two in his keen cunning way. A cowed, dogged look crept into his face—one of those sudden changes that often come upon cracked-brained persons. Realizing that he was in the presence of one superior



in strength and energy to himself, he quietly submitted to the inevitable, just as a wise sane man would have done.

"Ha, ha," he laughed, pointing out David. "There is the devil who was with me in the moon, last night. He has turned traitor and foiled me, just as he meant to do all the time; but go to him if you will, pretty dear, I can't keep you."

He made no effort to escape, but sat down on the grass near a purple bed of phlox, perfectly resigned to the new order of events, and began to plait the flowers into wreaths, talking plaintively of Eloise while he worked. In a few moments, the keepers from whom he had escaped, coming up the street, perceived him; he gave himself up to them without a struggle.

David and Hope had been talking to some purpose, in the meantime. All at once, the

girl realized how lonely the present was and how barren the future would be with nobody to weave the tangled threads into some sort of beauty and order. When David's arm slid about her waist, and his lips touched hers, though he colored to the roots of his hair, and trembled with agitation, she did not seek to repulse him. The truth was plain as day at last, and she did love this man!

They were married, and manage to live very happily together, though Sister Bodkins does insist on teaching her eldest grandchild to read from the identical tract she pinned to Hope's shawl that evening at Major Thornton's.

And Mrs. Cameron, the poor and proud, you ask? She is quite reconciled to the match, though she laughingly tells Hope, sometimes, that she couldn't help herself, and so took "Hobson's choice."

## HOUSEWORK VERSUS STORIES.

BY MRS. N. D. BUHLMAN.

I AM tired and out of patience! Moreover, I am indignant. And now, O ye weavers of bright and alluring, but impossible and impracticable theories, ye left "story-writers," it is my deliberate intention to impale you upon the point of my new gold pen, and demand that you make unto me full restitution for the damages sustained by my feelings and finances in my futile endeavors to put into practice aforesaid alluring theories.

Now I dearly love a good story. What daughter of Eve, that is not as devoid of bright hopes and sweet fancies as a dried mullein stalk, does not? But O, these immaculate, these matchless heroines, that meet the inevitable reverses of fortune with such a heavenly smile, and retire to a one-story cottage with three small children, do their own housework, and always come to breakfast in "snowy cambric wrapper" and distracting blue ribbons, who always have a bouquet of rosebuds on the breakfast table, and meet John with a "smile!"

Now the reverse of fortune I don't deny—the heavenly smile I don't object to; the three small children, one-story cottage and housework are more than probable; but the "snowy cambric wrapper," blue ribbons and rosebud accompaniments, I flout, I protest against, I utterly and boldly deny!

Now it's not likely that my arrow is aimed at any of the talented contributors to Ballou's. It's not probable that I'm going to lay a train of powder under the delightful and fascinating productions that the editor is at so much pains and expense to procure, and then ask him, please will he touch it off and blow them all up? I should hope that I am not quite so unsophisticated as that. But when one wants to give one's long pent-up wrath an airing, where can it be done to better advantage than in the columns of the Union? For everybody reads it, and it's a moral certainty that some of those wretches, those disturbers of my happiness, those writers, who keep that same much-enduring heroine in that identical "snowy muslin wrapper" constantly going the rounds of this paper or that, will be sure to get the benefit of it.

And now, methinks I behold a vast host of romance writers bearing down upon me in battle array, and perhaps—O, direful thought!—backed by the dear, duped, deluded and beguiled editors themselves! For this love in a cottage with white muslin trimmings is a vastly popular delusion, judging from the amount of it one sees printed—and it does look pretty in print. But I never run, and am prepared to do battle or die at the pen's point.

I am a housekeeper myself of a year's experience, and so know whereof I do affirm. I didn't object to beginning in a cottage and doing my own work—it would be so delightfully like a story, you know. Did I possess a single article of apparel less dainty than the prescribed cambric wrappers and ruffled white aprons with the cutest little bibs, and pockets cut and trimmed expressly after the directions given by aforesaid bachelor and maiden lady writers, who never saw a kitchen? Go to my second bureau drawer, whither they are ingloriously banished, and behold them! Facts and fiction declined to harmonize. My lacerated feelings bleed afresh when I recall my persevering attempts to keep house *a la* story-book. I couldn't build fires, sweep the kitchen, run down cellar for meat, wash potatoes, bring water from the spring, and run to the garden for lettuce, without reducing that snowy wrapper to a state of—but the English language is not copious enough to express my feelings whenever I think of that. And then Charley would get into a state of mind waiting so long for breakfast, while I was puffing my hair and pinning on the time-honored blue ribbons, and wandering in the dew-spangled garden—a *la* story-book again—culling roses with which to deck the matin meal.

We all know by heart the unvarying bill of fare presented by that ideal establishment. "A little round table covered with spotless linen, on which are set flaky biscuit, a roll of fresh golden butter, a plate of honey, and a dish of fresh crimson strawberries."

Suppose that model female's husband—a sordid unromantic creature—expresses a decided preference for an occasional breakfast of buckwheat cakes, beefsteak and hot coffee. Suppose honey always gives her and the children the stomach-ache, necessitating prompt and frequent doses of "pain-killer?" Suppose they live in some outlandish locality, where the strawberry season does not last the year round—supposing the best butter the market affords, instead of being "fresh and golden," possesses an odor and flavor highly suggestive of melted candle ends? What if love or money can't buy a spoonful of milk or cream, the wood is green, the chimney will smoke, and the oven *won't* bake on the bottom, and for these and a few other

slight and insufficient reasons the biscuit decline to be "flaky?" How does that historic female manage it then? Shades of our much-quoted grandmothers, tearfully and plaintively I ask you *how* does she do it?

Another thing; I notice that these aforementioned chroniclers always—singularly enough—omit to mention who does the washing and ironing in that model household, where white wrappers and spotless table linen prevail.

I know who did mine, and the memory thereof even now brings the silent tear. Behold me now of a morning busy in my snug little kitchen, attired in a gingham wrapper—dark-colored at that—with a plain linen collar, when it isn't a paper one, my hair brushed plainly behind my ears into a net—and O sympathizing reader! it is not one bit becoming to me that way—but then, Charley don't have his states of mind any more, for breakfast is ready on time, while I find afternoon quite enough to don white muslins, blue ribbons and crimps.

## HOW DICK AND GERTY BECAME INDIANS.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

"It's just as bad here as it was at home—nothing but being dressed up, and having your hair fixed, and your shoes brushed, all the time," said Dick, with the deepest of frowns on his chubby little face. "And you mustn't go in swimming because the water is too deep, or too cold, or too something; and you mustn't go out in a boat, because it might tip over; and you mustn't go into the woods, for fear you will get lost. A feller might as well be shut up in a cage, like the lions and things in circuses!"

"It's dreadful," assented Gerty, with a doleful sigh. "But a boy doesn't have to bear much besides a girl." (Compared with a girl, Gerty meant. Her ideas were too large for her stock of words.) "You don't have to wear a white dress always, and sashes and things, and have your hair

crimped, and light kid boots, so you can't go into the grass at all for fear of soiling them, and your hat on every minute, for fear you'll tan. Mamma said it wouldn't be fashionable here at all, and we could have a good time; and it is fashionabler than it was at Lenox! I wish I could spoil all the clothes I've got. Mamma couldn't get any more, away off here, and I would borrow a calico dress from the washerwoman's little girl, and run away and have a good time! Wouldn't I dig clams on the shore, and couldn't I climb trees like a squirrel!"

Poor little Gerty did not care at all for fine clothes. She was what her mother called a "tomboy," and at home was constantly in disgrace for running away to play with the boys. She was not a bit of a fine lady, much to her mother's distress,

"and did not want to be 'fashionable.'" She had been delighted at the idea of coming away off here to Cocheeset, because it was so far out of the world that people would not be always thinking of what clothes they had on. And now she was in despair because it was "fashionabler" than the place where they had spent last summer. As for Dick, he felt just now that his life was a burden. He leaned his chin on the railing of the piazza, in a corner of which Gerty and he were ensconced, with two jet black kittens who formed the chief attractions of the Mountain House to them, and reflected.

"I wish I was a Indian," he said, very earnestly, at length.

"But you aint," said Gerty, "so there's no use in wishing that."

"That's just exactly like a girl," said Dick, scornfully. "If a thing aint, they just give up! They never think of trying to do anything about it."

To be a girl was a great cross to Gerty. Dick had such a contempt for girls, and Dick was sure to be right.

"I'm sure," she said, after a moment's thought, "when mamma said we couldn't have Fido because they asked so much for him, and you cried, I saved up all my pennies and the two dollars that Uncle John gave me to buy a workbox, and bought him. I didn't have a bit of candy for a month. I don't always give up. But when you can't do anything, like being a Indian, why, you have to give up."

"Do you?—you just wait and see!"

Dick's tone was triumphant, and his air was full of mystery.

"Why, you have to be born so," said Gerty. "They are black."

"You just wait and see! I guess I can do a thing or two, when I set out!"

Gerty was sorely puzzled, but great was her faith in Dick.

"O, if you can—if you are going to—do it me be one, too, wont you, Dicky? Tell me how?" she said, pleadingly.

"You'll let on; girls can't keep a secret."

"O indeed I wont tell, Dicky! O, if we only could be truly Indians, and live in a camp on the shore!"

It required a good deal of coaxing to induce Dick to unfold his plan for becoming an Indian, but Gerty finally succeeded. I think he meant to tell her all the time. He thought a good deal of Gerty, in spite of

her being a girl, and liked to have her share all his adventures; but he thought it added to his dignity and importance to be reserved.

This was the substance of the plan, when, their little curly towheads very close together, it was finally revealed: There was a party of strolling minstrels at the Mountain House; they had given an entertainment in the village the evening before, and several of their number had been transformed into "persons of color," much to the astonishment of Dicky, who had seen that they were all white when they left the house. He had sought an interview with the leader that morning, and discovered the secret. It was only a little "liquid blacking," carefully applied.

"He's a real jolly feller, and I know he will give me some of it if I ask him," said Dick; "and we'll mix a little water with it. Indians aint quite so black as negroes, you know. Then we'll cut off our hair short—Indians mustn't have curly hair—and go down to the Indian camp, and tell them we are Indians, and want to live with them."

"But how shall we find the way alone?—and what if they wont have us?" said Gerty, whose bump of caution was more largely developed than Dick's.

"O, they'll be sure to have us! Indians always think a great deal of each other. And do you suppose I am such a goose as not to know the way, when I have been there twice?"

Gerty caught her breath at the prospect. It was so exciting and delightful, and yet so terrifying! It was such a bold step from a little civilized girl, who wore sashes and had her hair crimped, to a little Indian girl who sat on the floor, and wove baskets, and sailed in a birch-bark canoe! All her lingering doubts were dispelled by Dick's confidence, and she was eager to commence the preparations at once.

"We can't do anything yet. I've thought it all over," said Dick, sagely. "Somebody would be sure to see us. But mamma is going to drive with Mrs. Nelson at three o'clock, and Lucy is going berrying with one of the table-girls; I heard them planning it. Lucy will tell us to play with the kittens on the piazza. As if a feller almost grown up could be always playing with kittens! You just wait till they are out of sight, and we'll manage it!"

Fortunately for the children's plan, they were left alone that afternoon, as Dick had expected. Lucy, their nurse, was not allowed to leave them alone, but as the kittens had hitherto proved an unfailing source of amusement, thus keeping them out of mischief, she yielded to the temptation of going berrying.

As soon as Lucy was out of sight, the children stole out to a grove at a little distance from the house. Dick carried a little bottle full of the precious "blacking," which he had coaxed from the leader of the minstrel troupe, and Gerty carried her mother's scissors.

The preparations took longer than they had expected. Dick's curls were so very thick that it was hard for Gerty to get the scissors through them; and when they were all ready, the transformation was not as perfect as they had expected. Gerty was afraid people would have to be told that Dick was an Indian, after all, and Dick wished that Gerty's hair, cropped close to the roots, would not still show how light it was. He was quite sure that Indians had dark hair. And then the blacking was so *very black!* diluting it seemed to make no difference. He had never seen an Indian so black as Gerty was, and his face, as he looked at it in the brook, seemed to darken the whole water; and how queerly his little light blue eyes looked out of it!

"Never mind," said he, after a long look at Gerty. "If we aint Indians, what are we? We surely aint anything else!"

Gerty thought that was unanswerable logic, and took heart.

"If they don't see that we are Indians, we can tell them so," she said.

Dick assented, but had sufficient faith in the discrimination of the Indians to think there would be no need of telling them.

Gerty gave the kittens a farewell hug, stifled a little sigh that arose as she thought of her mamma, and then they turned their backs resolutely upon civilization. It was nearly three miles to the Indian camps, and it was four o'clock in the afternoon when they started. Very foot-sore and weary were the little travellers before two of the long miles had been gone over, and then when they had to choose between two roads, Dick, who had been there twice, and was sure he knew the way, chose the wrong one, and they wandered more than half a mile out of the way, and

had to retrace their steps. Still Dick's courage showed no signs of faltering, and if Gerty felt any regret, she stifled it bravely.

It was almost dark when they reached the Indian tents, two as tired and hungry little pilgrims as you ever saw. Some little Indians playing around the camps stared at them with open-mouthed wonder, and an old squaw, sitting cross-legged before one of the doors, after a prolonged stare, got up and approached them.

Gerty could not quite understand what she said, but Dick was not at all inclined to be spokesman. He hung back, behind Gerty, and waited for her to answer—if he was a boy!

Gerty soon discovered that the squaw wanted to know who they were, and where they came from, and she replied, bravely:

"We are Indians, and we want to live with you."

The squaw did not seem to understand. She looked as if she were surprised to hear that they were Indians, and as she looked at them curiously, from head to foot, a sudden thought struck Gerty.

"O Dicky, we forgot our hands! Indians never have white hands, of course!" she whispered.

After a moment's puzzled survey of the children, the old squaw began to laugh. She laughed loud and long, as if it were something very funny, and Dick forgot his fear in indignation, and drew himself up in a very dignified way.

Then some Indian men came up, attracted by the old woman's laughter, and they talked together in a low tone, and then one of them tried to make Dick tell where he came from, but Dick persisted in saying only that they were Indians, and wanted to live in the tents. After a long parley, during which Gerty began to feel a dreary homesickness stealing over her, and Dick's stout heart was ready to fail, the old squaw took them into her tent. Such a queer place as it was! The ground was the only floor, and there was no furniture, unless a pile of old ragged quilts thrown down in one corner for a bed, could be called so. And there were so many people in it that there was no room for furniture—a man and three women sitting on the floor, a half dozen children playing and quarrelling about, and a little sleeping papoose tied up in a bundle and hung up—

Dick and Gerty slunk into a corner, but the old squaw drew them forward to the centre of the tent, where the little Indian children had begun to gather eagerly around a dish of hot fried pork, which one of the women had just brought from a fire that burned just outside the door. The little Indians were divided between hunger and a desire to see the new-comers. They put their fingers into the pan—one less courageous than the others screaming now and then that he had burned his fingers—and then they came and pulled Gerty's dress and sash with their greasy hands.

The woman kept motioning to the children to eat, but Gerty shook her head decidedly, Dick more faintly. They were both very hungry, poor children, but it was impossible to eat that. Besides, Gerty had a lump in her throat that would have rendered eating difficult, and Dick was homesick and half terrified at the strange scene.

The woman seemed friendly and pleasant enough, but Dick did not at all like the looks of the man. There was something in his face that reminded him of the picture in his Christmas book of the giant who ate roasted boy every day for his dinner. He wondered if Gerty noticed the resemblance.

Suddenly the man arose and came towards the children. He staggered in walking—Dick thought he must be ill, but I think a bottle that lay on the ground beside him may have had something to do with it—and he did not see the dish of pork, and plump went one of his bare feet into the hot fat!

He uttered a howl of pain and rage, he knocked the little Indians right and left,

and kicked the dish across the tent. Dick caught Gerty's hand, and dragged her to the door—poor little Gerty, who shook with terror! Once outside the tent, they ran as fast as their small legs would carry them, they hardly thought or cared where, if it was only away from that dreadful man! They could hear him still screaming and uttering fearful oaths.

"O, if he doesn't get us—if we ever get home, we'll never be Indians again, will we?" said Gerty.

They ran towards the shore, and there was a canoe drawn up on the beach, plainly visible in the moonlight.

"We'll get into that, and go off on the water, and he can't get us!" said Dick.

"O, but we shall be drowned!" said Gerty. Still drowning was better than being caught by that man, and she got into the canoe without another word.

What would have become of the poor children then, I do not know, if they had not suddenly, just as Dick was pushing the canoe off, heard a shout—a familiar voice, that made Gerty's heart leap.

"Children! children! Dick! Gerty!" it said.

"O papa! papa! here we are!" they both cried in a breath; and poor little Gerty sobbed as if her heart would break with the great relief and joy.

I need not tell you how thankful they were to get home, nor how it rejoiced their mother's heart to see them, nor how their father had traced them, after a long search, to the Indian camps; you can imagine all that. But I will tell you that they never made the slightest attempt to be "Indians" again.

## HOW FATE SETTLED IT.

BY ADA L. FLETCHER.

## CHAPTER I.

SHE wasn't pretty! Alas, that I should have to confess it in the very beginning of her story. You, who don't like any but pretty heroines with flowing golden hair and azure eyes, will have to lay this aside, for I can't help it. She wasn't pretty in the general acceptance of the term. She didn't have flowing golden hair. Hers was brown, and to save trouble, cut short to her head, about which it had a fashion of creeping and curling in a very unorthodox style. Her eyes were brown, too, very wide-awake brown eyes, with now and then a sparkle of mischief in their depths, but oftenest full of a sadness that very rarely found expression otherwise. Her complexion was very good, though nothing extraordinary—not the faintest resemblance to alabaster! Just now there were a

few freckles scattered over it, caused by picking blackberries the afternoon before, and letting her bonnet swing from her neck by its strings, instead of reposing in its rightful place. Her nose—alas! her nose was undoubted *pug*! Not French "*retrousse*," but *American pug*! Teeth good, of course, in a firm, sensible mouth, neither too large nor too small. No romantic white clothed her *petite* form either, but the trim little figure was dressed in a neat calico. Her white apron was laid aside—ditto cuffs, as she sat at her writing-table, scattered over with pens, ink and foolscap paper.

She wasn't writing, but she had been, for her forefinger bore traces of warfare with ink. You will like her still less when I confess to you that she was *literary*! Wrote poems for the county newspaper, for which she was



paid vast sums of flattery, and notoriety, and stories for a periodical, whose publishers were very kind to the new beginner, and gave her enough to keep her in muslin dresses, white aprons, and pink ribbons during the summer—one nice dress and two pairs of number two shoes during the winter. She had aspirations, of course, for something higher, and in her day dreams very often saw herself heralded in flaming type as the “distinguished authoress, Miss Edith Carden;” but she was a sensible little girl, and knew she must take things slowly. I mean she had been sensible, but this morning such a prospect had opened before her wondering eyes—of wealth and ease, travel and every earthly pleasure, it seemed to her, that no wonder she sat there with the letter in her hand, dazed and speechless.

There she had sat, ever since the mail boy had thrown her letter in at the window. The beds were not made up stairs, and she heard her stepmother rattling the dishes in a warning manner in the kitchen. The baby was crying, too, in a most piteous manner, and Andrew Jackson was thumping on the stairs for “Edie” to bring him some string for his kite; but what cared Edith? Let us look over her shoulder, and see for ourselves the words that have opened this vista of glory to these young eyes.

“DEAR MISS EDITH,”—the letter began—“You will, no doubt, be surprised when you see the signature of this letter, and still more when you read its contents, for if you ever knew my name, no doubt it has faded from your memory. But, dear child, the memory of your brown eyes, so like your mother’s, as they looked up into mine from your place upon my knee, is still very dear to me. You called yourself my ‘little wife’ then, Edith, and during all these years I have watched and waited for you, my darling. You thought your father sent you north to school, did you not? I begged him not to let you know differently, because I was afraid you would learn to dislike me if you knew that I had sent you there. I did not come at once and take you out of your poverty and struggling, because I wanted you to grow up just the steady, earnest, self-reliant little woman that you are. O child, I have watched you, and my heart has ached for you often, but I knew it was all just the discipline your impetuous spirit needed. You did not know that I was silent member.

of the firm for whom you have been writing and have read eagerly everything you have written, longing all the time to take my gem out of its rough surroundings and give it a setting of gold. And now, my darling, I want you—I need you more than I can tell you, and I love you dearly. I know you—every phase of your character, every feature of your face, and I want you for my wife. I have more money than we shall ever spend, and I want to take you to Europe, where your spirit can revel in all that it has longed for, and that has seemed unattainable. Will you come to me, Edith? I do not ask you to love me just at first, but will you try?”

“Your best friend, PHILIP MAX.”

When she had read the letter for the fiftieth time, Edith bent her head upon the table and wept passionately. Why had this temptation come to her just now? Only to show her her own weakness? For, you see, Edith, like all girls of twenty, had her love dreams, and it was only last week she had listened to the “old, old story,” as Will Ellis had whispered it in the moonlight, and with pulses throbbing with joy had placed her little hand in his with the promise to be his wife, whenever he could “take care of her.” And she loved him—O, she loved him—better than she ever could love any one else, she thought, even as she read the letter. But ah, the temptation! the temptation! No wonder the poor little girl had nothing to do but cry.

She was not quite so ignorant as Mr. May thought, for just before her father died he had told her of her benefactor and friend Mr. May, but only the bare facts, being a man always chary of his words. He had not even told her where he was—but, on the slender foundation given her, she had built a romance to suit herself. An old lover of her mother’s, so she dreamed, who had cared for the daughter for the mother’s sake. An old gentleman by this time. Some day perhaps she would meet him and thank him for all his kindness. But she had never, in all her dreamings, imagined anything like this. His wife! To be taken out of this dull uninteresting life of monotonous drudgery. Out of this town, that seemed to be sleeping the sleep of Rip Van Winkle, never dreaming of anything beyond its own ken. Out into the broad world! To Europe—the thoughts took her very breath away. And then, the love and sympathy that would be

hers, such as she never knew! For, though she loved Will Ellis, and knew that he loved her, she was dimly conscious that there were heights in her nature to which he could never reach, and depths to which he could not descend. Then it would be years before Will could take her out of the place she called home into a real home. But with this thought her heart smote her, and she paused. What! Could she give up Will because he was poor and she must wait for him, just for the sake of the wealth the other man, whom she did not love, could lavish upon her? Was Edith Carden but a mercenary little wretch, after all?

Just at this point of her musings, her stepmother's plaintive voice reached her:

"Edith, are you never coming down? My head aches, and baby is so cross, and—" The voice died away in very faintness.

With a weary sigh, and quite an unheroine-like shrug of the shoulders, Edith took up the burden of her daily life again. But all through the busy day—either cooking, washing dishes, or walking the floor with the baby; tying strings for Andrew Jackson, or cutting paper dolls for the twin girls—the thought was still omnipresent. What should she do? Which road should she take?

She had no one to go to for counsel or aid. Her stepmother, whose large form and red cheeks were so ludicrously disproportionate to her faint voice and delicate constitution, who lay on the lounge all day and read yellow-backed novels, had nothing in common with her. She would as soon think of appealing to the baby for advice. At last, when the twins and the baby were asleep, Andrew Jackson peaceably playing marbles with neighbor Jackson's boy, and Mrs. Carden dozing over a new book, Edith stood at the gate in the twilight, still doubting and hesitating. She had changed her calico for a pretty light muslin, and placed a pink rose in the ribbon that held back her hair; and, though she wasn't beautiful, was a pleasant sight to meet a lover's eyes. Will Ellis thought so, anyway, and he quickened his step as he came up the street. How handsome he looked! and how dear he was to the little fluttering heart of our Edith! Could she give him up? Will didn't know it, but the momentous question was solved as he stooped over the gate, whispered "My precious little comfort!" and kissed the crimsoning cheek.

An hour later, Edith ran swiftly up to her

room, and with rapid fingers, not giving herself time to think, wrote Mr. May the decisive letter. She was very grateful to him for all his kindness, and especially for the offer he had made her; but she could not be his wife, simply because he could make her a wealthy woman, and gratify her tastes for travel and books, because she had promised already to be the wife of the man she loved and who loved her. She was very sorry, but knew he could not love her very deeply, because he did not know her. Did not know how silly and childish she was, and how unworthy his love. Would he forgive her and still be her friend?

She was not content until the letter was in the office. Then she went about her work with a glow at her heart, and thanked God that she had been able to choose aright—that she had not yielded to ambition, and made three hearts miserable for the sake of the golden god.

Still there was a queer little pang of pain in the midst of her satisfaction, as she thought of the sorrow her answer must give the man who had been so faithful a friend through all her childish years.

## CHAPTER II.

ONE day two weeks later, Edith was ironing out in the roomy old kitchen, giving the finishing touches to the ruffles of her pink muslin, which she was to wear at a picnic with Will Ellis the next day. She had heard not a word from Mr. May, and there was a touch of sadness in the brown eyes as she thought of it, and wondered if he would give up being her friend because he could not be her husband.

"Edith," said her mother, languidly opening the door, "there is a gentleman in here to see about getting board. Will you see him?"

Edith was accustomed to such demands as this, for Mrs. Carden was unable to deal with anything more matter-of-fact than the romantic adventures of Clarissa Howard or Edward Fitzallen. So she put her iron again on the stove, set the baby a little further back on his blanket, calmly took the twins out of the apple-barrel, in which they were apparently standing on their heads, and then followed her mother into the sitting-room.

The gentleman was standing with his back toward her, gazing out of the window as she entered, but turned quickly when she spoke.

If there was one thing especially sweet about Edith Carden, it was her voice—that low, clear voice, full of depth and richness, which so few American women possess. Her words were few and commonplace, but the music of her voice gave them a charm.

"You wished to see about board?" she said, simply.

The stranger was a young man, certainly not more than thirty years of age, with black, silky hair thrown carelessly back from his forehead, and keen gray eyes, that just now were wonderfully pleasant as he bowed to the young girl.

"Yes," he said, "I am an artist, and wish to pass the summer in your town, to sketch the scenery about it. Can you give me a summer home?"

It took but a few moments to make the arrangements. They had always taken a summer boarder, and the gentleman's room was soon ready. Andrew Jackson was sent with the newcomer, who gave his name as Walter Edwards, to the depot, to help with his luggage, and Edith went back to her ironing. But some way she was haunted by the kindly gray eyes and pleasant smile. She had noticed, too, the book he had in his hand, a blue and gold "Owen Meredith," and longed for a glimpse at its pages. She would ask him to loan it to her some day, she thought, and then her mind went back to Mr. May, from thence to Will Ellis and the picnic, and so absorbed was she in pleasant thought, that the baby pulled the washpan over and played in the water with perfect impunity.

The summer passed by slowly and pleasantly. Mr. Edwards proved a very pleasant companion, and Edith grew to like him very much. He was very quiet, but helped the girl in a great many ways, loaned her his books and magazines, and sometimes read aloud to her his favorite poems, while the nimble fingers sewed; for the mending-basket was never empty. Very often their reading was broken in upon by handsome Will Ellis, who made no secret of his appropriation of sweet Edith Carden, whose face glowed so at his coming. Then Mr. Edwards would take himself and his book away, and leave the lovers alone.

But, as the days wore on, there came a shadow over Edith's face. The brown eyes less often sparkled with mischievous happiness, and the red lips had a sorrowful droop, that would have made one who loved her

long to clasp her in his arms and kiss them back to smiles. The gray eyes noticed it all, and were not long in finding out the cause.

One evening Mr. Edwards had taken his sketch-book, and walked out toward one of the green hills that gave the town of J—its only beauty. He was not sketching though, and the gray eyes looked dreamy as a girl's. He went to his favorite seat under an overhanging rock, and sat there idly watching the sunset, when suddenly he was startled by a voice on the opposite side of the rock.

"I tell you, Edith Carden, I will not stand it! There is a limit to every man's patience. Everybody in town is twitting me with being thrown over for that artist fellow, and you know yourself that you are always with him."

"For shame, Will Ellis!" said the low sweet voice, that had made Walter Edwards's heart throb quicker since the first day he had heard it. "If you cannot trust me more than that—if your love can be turned to suspicion by the idle taunts of a few gossip-mongers, it were well that we came to an understanding. Mr. Edwards is my friend, has helped me in a great many ways that you could not, but you wrong both me and him when you hint of love between us. I have known there was something wrong for weeks, Will, and it has almost broken my heart, but I am glad this explanation has taken place. I cannot love one who doubts my honor."

"But, Edith," said Will, "all I ask of you is to give up your friendship for this Edwards, of whom you know so little. You know he loves you, everybody knows it, and you are out in his company as much as mine—"

"Stop, Will, a moment," said the calm voice, "and think. When was I in his company except on the two occasions when you could not take me to the lecture, but could take your cousin Laura to the party at Mrs. Moore's, and the ball at the Lee House? Ah, Will, I meant to spare you this—I did not mean to tell you that I had discovered the double game you were playing, but you have forced me to it. You gave Harry Jackson a note to carry, and he gave it to my little brother, who supposed of course it was for me. Not looking at the direction, I read it, and then sent it to Miss Laura. Take your ring, Will. You and I are friends."

"Edith! Edith! Surely you are not in earnest! I love you in spite of my folly—"

"No, Will, you do not love me, and my idol has fallen to the dust."

And Mr. Edwards knew by the light step on the grass that she had gone away alone. He had listened to the conversation with changing emotion, but now there was an unmistakable gleam of triumph in the gray eye mingled with the pity he felt for the girl in her lonely sorrow. He was not long in following her to the house.

As Edith entered, Andrew Jackson met her at the door. "There is a man in the house," said he, "and ma kissed him."

The youth was given to such wild statements that Edith paid no heed to this, and was passing on, when her mother's voice arrested her.

She entered the room and was introduced to Mr. Jones. "Who is to be my husband," said Mrs. Carden, tranquilly. Edith could only stare at her in blank amazement. "It has been settled, and we have been corresponding a good while," said the widow, "but I thought I would say nothing about it until it was too late to make a scene—my nerves—"

"I have nothing to say," slowly said Edith. "I hope you will be happy."

She walked unsteadily out of the room and up the stairs, and sank upon the floor in her own room too dizzy to think. What was to happen next in her life? O God! if it might be death! But she stifled that prayer with another for strength, and there, all alone in the dusk of the evening, fought her life-trouble hand to hand.

"Say, Edith!" said a voice at the door; "I want to come in. Here's a letter Mr. Edwards brought from town for ye, and ma says, wont you come down? Mr. Jones aint had no supper, and say—is he my pa?"

She took the letter, and lighting her lamp opened it without much interest, but started painfully as she recognized the handwriting. The temptation again! Just as she was weak and faint from her struggle, she must have the battle all over again, for it was Mr. May's handwriting.

"Edith darling," the letter said, "I cannot give you up! I have given you time now to reconsider my question. Again I lay my heart and fortune at your feet. Darling, be merciful! My life will be a blank without the one for whom I have lived so many years."

Here now was a way of escape from all her trouble. Her lover had proven false, and

she knew her love had been but a fancy. Why not, then, accept this man's offer and take what pleasure life had in store for her? But ah! would it be right? Would it not be wronging her mother's friend and her own benefactor, to give him in exchange for his own noble and generous heart and wealth, only her poor hand? She had no heart to offer. Alas, for our poor weak Edith! There, in the sacred privacy of her own room, she was forced to own it—that unasked, unsought, she had given her love to the owner of the dark gray eyes, who had been so much help to her in his quiet manly way, but of whom she knew so little. This was why the blow of her lover's treachery had fallen so lightly. Unheeding her stepmother's call, she seized her pen and wrote again rapidly; begging Mr. May to forget that she had ever lived—that so unhappy a girl had ever marred the brightness of his life. Then she called her little brother in feverish haste, and bade him take the letter to Mr. Edwards and ask him to mail it for her. Eager to get it out of her hands, out of the house, before she should be tempted beyond her strength.

The night was one of feverish unrest. She lay pondering her life problem. What must she do? She could rejoice over one thing—her stepmother's marriage—for it gave her freedom to go where she chose and labor as she pleased. She would go far away, to some city where her identity would be lost and she could struggle on alone with no one to aid or hinder. Nature is very merciful, and in spite of the novel writers, there are very few people who pass entirely sleepless nights from pain or trouble. So Edith forgot her sorrow in sleep, and awoke the next morning feeling stronger and better than before in weeks. But when her work was over, and she went up to the old rock on the hillside, where she had passed so many quiet, happy hours, she broke down again, and threw herself on the grass in utter grief.

"What ails you, little Edith?" said Mr. Edwards, kneeling beside her. "Will you not tell me?"

She could not speak for a while, but looked up very gratefully into her friend's face. Very tenderly he lifted the little blue veined hand that lay on the grass beside him and raised it to his lips.

"I am going away to-morrow, Edith, and if this little hand were not already pledged I would ask its owner to go with me as my wife."

The trees, the flowers, and even the grass about them, seemed whirling in a mad waltz before Edith's tearful eyes. This was a little more than she could bear, and for one moment she lost her consciousness, which was only restored by a rain of kisses on lips, cheek and brow, and she found herself in Mr. Edwards's arms.

"I was cruel, little girl," he murmured. "I knew your hand was free, but I wanted your heart too. Is it mine, my darling?"

Do you suppose I am going to tell you what she answered? I only know it was highly satisfactory to her lover, who did not at all look like the same quiet Mr. Edwards as he sat on the bank, his gray eyes fairly ablaze with triumphant joy.

"And you are willing to be a poor man's wife, Edith?" he asked, presently.

"If you are the man," she said, demurely, her face almost radiant as his.

"But how am I to reconcile this with the answer you gave me last night?" he asked, gravely.

The brown eyes opened widely in amazement. "Last night?"

"Yes," he said, taking a letter from his pocket.

In astonishment unspeakable she recognized the letter she had sent Mr. May the night before.

"Why, Walter," she stammered.

"Yes, darling," he said, "I must confess it. Walter Edwards and Philip May are one and the same person! I had watched and loved you too long, Edith, to give you up so lightly, and after I received your first letter, *I determined to come here under an assumed name and see for myself if you were to be happy with your lover, and the rest you know.*"

"But I thought you—"

"Yes," he laughed, "I know you thought I was an old man—your mother's lover, didn't you, Edith? But it was a mistake. I was only a boy of fifteen when you used to climb on my knee and call yourself my little wife. I was rusticated in J—two summers. Are you very angry with me for deceiving you, little one?"

"*Everybody's a kisser*," broke in Andrew Jackson's discontented voice, followed by that youth's head and shoulders, as he climbed over the rock. "I reckon you're going to be married like ma and Mr. Jones."

A merry burst of laughter ended the love scene, and the pair left Andrew to his morose meditations.

So Fate took the tangled skein of Edith Carden's life out of her hands and straightened it for her. She married the man of her choice, and went to Europe after all.